

S E R M O N S

A N D

T R A C T S

U P O N

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

By WILLIAM ADAMS, D. D.

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And late VICAR of ST. CHAD'S, SHREWSBURY.

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THE following Sermons were all of them preached in the Parish Church of *St. Chad, Shrewsbury*, during the author's residence there: and are here collected into a volume with his permission. The Essay on Miracles was first a sermon preached at the visitation of Mr. Archdeacon *Vyse*, in the year 1751: which the author being desired to publish, enlarged into it's present form. That on the Nature and Obligation of Virtue was preached at the primary visitation of Dr. *Cornwallis*, now Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*, and published at his Grace's request. The rest were printed at the request of the Corporation, or of the Societies before whom they were preached. The Pastoral Advice was drawn up in pursuance of the injunctions of Bishop *North* to his clergy, requiring them to be careful in preparing their young parishioners for confirmation. It has been translated into Welsh by the care of Bishop *Barrington*, and published in French by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge.

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C O N T E N T S.

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A N
E S S A Y

IN ANSWER TO

MR. H U M E'S

ESSAY ON MIRACLES.

—It fumus ad auras. VIRG.

Printed first in the Year 1751.

*"In return for this little aid, and to make
me amends for mentioning his name in a
pamphlet whose subject is not of the respectable
kind, I do hereby give that gentleman, my
or, but most hearty, sincere thanks for this
very other passage in his accurate unan-
imable essay". (See p. 129. of 4 vol.) —
Ad Blackburn's Serious Enquiry, §. p. 20.
note.*

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ESSAY, &c.

M R. *HUME* hath many of the talents of a fine writer, and hath justly obtained that character by the agreeable *Essays moral and political* *, with which he has obliged the world. What he hath written well will create a prejudice in favour of his errors; and these will have all their bad influence, when recommended by so able an advocate. The present is a subject of the greatest importance, and the author expresses a particular satisfaction in his performance. These are reasons for considering it carefully, and for
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* The reader is desired to distinguish betwixt this and the *Philosophical Essays* of this author, which is the book referred to throughout this treatise.

guarding ourselves against being deceived by the artifice or eloquence of the writer.

He begins with challenging, a little indirectly, the thanks of the public, for a discovery, which, he apprehends, will be of universal service to mankind. This is nothing less than an infallible cure for superstition. "I flatter myself," says he, "that I have discovered an argument, which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and, consequently, will be useful as long as the world endures; for so long, I suppose, will the accounts of miracles and prodigies be found in all profane history*." The virtues of this specifick are such, that it exterminates all religions alike; as he shews, by trying its strength upon the *Christian*, which, where it prevails, is, perhaps, more obstinate and hard of cure than any other. Here, however, it has been known to fail. I have given it a fair trial, and known it tried by others, without the least effect, and think I can prove that there is no one ingredient of any virtue or efficacy in it.

The

* *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding*, p. 174, first edition, page 344 of the 4to Edit. 1758.

The secret itself is contained in the compass of a few lines: and therefore, to give some port and figure to it, the author has thought necessary to introduce it with some preliminary observations.

In the first of these, his meaning seems to be to lay down this as a principle — that all our reasonings concerning matter of fact are founded wholly on experience: “Tho’ experience be our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact, it must be acknowledged, that this guide is not altogether infallible, but in some cases is apt to lead us into errors and mistakes. One, who in our climate should expect better weather in any week of *June* than in one of *December*, would reason justly and conformable to experience; but ’tis certain, that he may happen in the event to find himself mistaken. However, we may observe, that in such a case he would have no cause to complain of experience; because it commonly informs us before-hand of the uncertainty, by that contrariety of events which we may learn from a diligent observation *.” In illustrating this

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* *Philosophical Essays*, p. 174.

observation, both here and elsewhere, he seems to confine it to such events as are future: “An hundred instances or experiments on one side, and fifty on another, afford a very doubtful expectation of any event; tho’ an hundred uniform experiments, with only one contradictory one, do reasonably beget a very strong degree of assurance †.” Here then I readily allow, that in reasoning concerning future contingencies experience is the best guide we have, tho’ in many cases, as will hereafter be seen, a very uncertain one.

This observation is followed by a prudent caution. “A wise man,” he tells us, “proportions his belief to the evidence. In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full proof of the future existence of that event. In other cases he proceeds with more caution: he weighs the opposite experiments; he considers which side is supported by the greatest number of experiments; to that side he inclines, with doubt and hesitation; and, when at last he fixes his judgment, the evidence exceeds not what

“ we

“ we properly call probability. — In all cases we must balance the opposite experiments, where they are opposite, and deduct the lesser number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the superior evidence *.” This logick is very just, and what, I am persuaded, every man of the plainest understanding knows how to practise, without learning it from the schools, or from the author’s refinements on the *curious and sublime subject* (as he calls it) of probability †.

He then proceeds — “ To apply these principles to a particular instance: We may observe, there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that derived from the testimony of men, and the reports of eye-witnesses and spectators. This species of reasoning perhaps one may deny to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. I shall not dispute about a word. ’Twill be sufficient to observe, that our assurance, in any argument of this kind, is derived from no other principle than our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual confor-

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“ mity

* P. 175.

† *Essay on Probability*, p. 97.

“ mity of facts to the report of witnesses*.”
 ’Tis difficult to say what the author would here exemplify, there being no clear connection between this and the preceding paragraphs. But, if I may presume to explain it, his argument stands thus : The principle he set out with, was, that our reasoning about matters of fact depends wholly upon experience. This he hath proved concerning such events as are future : he now wants to prove the same concerning facts that are past. Here he is aware, that besides experience, we have another guide, which is the testimony of history, that of witnesses, &c. These he does not chuse to distinguish from the former, but insinuates, that the evidence of testimony is included in that of experience, or that every argument from testimony is only an argument from experience, for as much as the truth of that depends ultimately upon this †. “ The ultimate standard,”

* *Philosoph. Essays*, p. 176.

† It may with more propriety be said, that the evidence of experience is included in that of testimony, than the contrary. Our own experience reaches around and goes back but a little way. But the experience of others, upon which we chiefly depend, is derived to us wholly from history and tradition, that is, from testimony. And it is obvious to observe, that, in a question of fact, the testimony of negative witnesses how many soever, is, for the most part

ard," he tells us below, " by which we determine disputes of this kind, is always derived from experience and observation." Now it is true, that the evidence of testimony must be resolved at last into experience: but this experience is of a species entirely distinct from that on which the natural probability of any fact attested rests: nor does it consist, as this author asserts, in our *observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts with the reports of witnesses*. It is built upon other principles, to which the author himself leads us in the words that follow: " Did not men's imagination naturally follow their memory — had they not commonly an inclination to truth, and a sentiment of probity — were they not sensible to shame, when detected in a falsehood — Were not these, I say, discovered by experience to be qualities inherent in human nature, we should never repose the least confidence in human testimony *." The first of these motives I do not understand. Of the rest I shall observe, that their force we collect, not so much from our observa-

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tion

part, no evidence at all; while positive testimony must, more or less, have its weight.

* P. 177.

tion of other men, as from our own feeling, and a consciousness of what passes within our own breast. We perceive in ourselves, that a love and reverence for truth is natural to the mind of man : and the same self-experience teaches us, that there are certain other principles in human nature, by which the veracity of men may be tried, and the truth of testimony be often put out of doubt, as will be hereafter seen.

The next observation is, that, “ as the
 “ evidence derived from witnesses and hu-
 “ man testimony is founded on past experi-
 “ ence, so it varies with the experience, and
 “ is regarded either as a proof or probabi-
 “ lity, according as the conjunction betwixt
 “ any particular kind of report and any
 “ kind of objects has been found to be con-
 “ stant or variable †.” Here again the au-
 thor’s meaning is lost in a thicket of words,
 which it is difficult for a common eye to
 penetrate. Let the reader try what he can
 make of the *conjunction varying betwixt any
 particular report and any kind of objects*. The
 credibility of an historical fact depends up-
 on the credibility of the fact itself, and that
 of the historian or witnesses who relate it.

These

These should be always considered distinctly; tho' the author, for reasons of his own, chuses to confound them. The latter of these depends in part upon principles that are fixed and invariable, such as those the author has just mentioned, which are general principles of human nature; and in part too on the personal character of the relator, the interest he has in the fact related, and other circumstances. As these circumstances vary, the evidence varies, and the fact becomes more or less credible. And so, concerning the natural credibility of the fact, this is greater or less, according as our own, and the observation of others, in cases of a similar nature, has been more or less uniform. Something like this I take to be the author's meaning in this place: and this is the amount of all that follows in this and the next paragraph. My design, therefore, in this remark, is, not to contest the author's principles, which, as far as I understand them, are right enough; but to shew that his style and manner of writing tend to embarrass the subject, and perplex the reader.

We are now coming nearer to the matter in question. "Suppose," says the author,
"that

“ that the fact, which the testimony endea-
 “ vours to establish, partakes of the extra-
 “ ordinary and the marvellous ; in that case,
 “ the evidence resulting from the testimony
 “ receives a diminution, greater or less, in
 “ proportion as the fact is more or less unu-
 “ sual. — When the fact attested is such a
 “ one as has seldom fallen under our obser-
 “ vation, here is a contest of two opposite
 “ experiences ; of which the one destroys
 “ the other, as far as its force goes, and the
 “ superior can only operate on the mind by
 “ the force which remains. The very same
 “ principle of experience, which gives us a
 “ certain degree of assurance in the testimo-
 “ ny of witnesses, gives us also, in this case,
 “ another degree of assurance against the
 “ fact which they endeavour to establish *.”
 Here the author seems to suppose, that a
 want of experience, in any case, is the same
 with experiencing the contrary. *When a fact
 attested hath seldom fallen under our observa-
 tion, “ here is,”* says he, *“ a contest of two
 “ opposite experiences :”* but, in reality, here
 is no experience at all ; only a fact not
 observed on one side, and positive evidence,
 or the fact attested, on the other — a very
 unequal contest ! as we shall presently see ;
 the

the slightest positive testimony being, for the most part, an over-balance to the strongest negative evidence that can be produced. I grant, however, all that the author's argument requires, *viz.* that experience teaches us, of many things, that they are improbable, and not to be hastily believed; of others, that they are naturally incredible: but these are so, not because they are unusual or unobserved, but because there is a known disproportion betwixt the cause assigned and the effect, or because the fact asserted is a contradiction to some known and universal truth.

These premises he now draws to a point, and makes them center in one conclusive argument against miracles: "To increase
 " the probability against the testimony of
 " witnesses, let us suppose, that the fact
 " which they affirm, instead of being only
 " marvellous, is really miraculous; and
 " suppose also, that the testimony, considered apart and in itself, amounts to an
 " entire proof: in that case, there is proof
 " against proof, of which the strongest
 " must prevail, but still with a diminution
 " of its force in proportion to that of its
 " antagonist *." I have just allowed, that
 there

* P. 179.

there are facts which experience assures us are wholly incredible: but of these I shall assert, that no good testimony can be produced in their favour. Truth is always consistent with itself; and no one truth can ever be contradicted by another. The author is, therefore, too kind in supposing that miracles may admit of full proof from testimony. I shall take no advantage of this concession, but readily acknowledge, that, if they are proved *à priori* to be incredible, it will be a vain attempt to prove them by testimony. Let us see, then, what the author alledges in bar of this proof. His batteries are now mounted, and he begins the attack.

“ A miracle,” says he, “ is a violation
 “ of the laws of nature; and, as a firm
 “ and unalterable experience hath estab-
 “ lished these laws, the proof against a mi-
 “ racle, from the nature of the fact, is
 “ as entire as any argument from experi-
 “ ence can possibly be imagined. Why is
 “ it more than probable, that all men must
 “ die—that lead cannot by itself remain
 “ suspended in the air—that fire consumes
 “ wood, and is extinguished by water—un-
 “ less

“ less it be, that these events are found
 “ agreeable to the laws of nature, and
 “ there is required a violation of these laws,
 “ or, in other words, a miracle, to prevent
 “ them? Nothing is esteemed a miracle,
 “ if it ever happens in the common course
 “ of nature. ’Tis no miracle, that a man
 “ in seeming good health should die of a
 “ sudden; because such a kind of death, tho’
 “ more unusual than any other, has yet
 “ been frequently observed to happen: but
 “ ’tis a miracle, that a dead man should
 “ come to life; because that hath never been
 “ observed in any age or country. There
 “ must, therefore, be an uniform experi-
 “ ence against every miraculous event, o-
 “ therwise the event would not merit the
 “ appellation. And, as an uniform ex-
 “ perience amounts to a proof, there is
 “ here a direct and full proof, from the
 “ nature of the fact, against the existence
 “ of any miracle: nor can such a proof
 “ be destroyed, or the miracle render’d cre-
 “ dible, but by an opposite proof that is
 “ superior *.”

I have endeavoured to preserve the
 strength of this argument entire, by col-
 lecting

lecting every thing that is of any import to it in the observations that precede it: and, that the reader may see it in its strongest light, I shall here repeat it, as it is again summed up by the author at the end of his Essay :

“ It appears, that no testimony for any
 “ kind of miracle can ever amount to a
 “ probability, much less to a proof; and
 “ that, even supposing it amounted to a
 “ proof, ’twould be opposed by another
 “ proof, derived from the very nature of the
 “ fact which it would endeavour to estab-
 “ lish. ’Tis experience alone which gives
 “ authority to human testimony; and ’tis
 “ the same experience which assures us of
 “ the laws of nature. When, therefore,
 “ these two kinds of experience are contra-
 “ ry, we have nothing to do but subtract
 “ the one from the other, and embrace an
 “ opinion, either on the one side or the o-
 “ ther, with that assurance which arises from
 “ the remainder. But, according to the
 “ principle here explained, this subtraction,
 “ with regard to all popular religions, a-
 “ mounts to an entire annihilation: and
 “ therefore we may establish it as a maxim,
 “ that no human testimony can have such
 “ force

“ force as to prove a miracle, and make it
 “ a just foundation for any such system of
 “ religion *.”

This is the author's great discovery. The whole secret is out. And here one cannot but wonder to see a position, which is laid down by all that write in defence of miracles, pleaded as a decisive argument against them, and to find the experience of all mankind brought in evidence against all the religions of the world. An experienced uniformity in the course of nature hath been always thought necessary to the belief and use of miracles. These are indeed relative ideas. There must be an ordinary regular course of nature, before there can be any thing extraordinary. A river must flow, before it's stream can be interrupted. It is strange, therefore, that this uniformity, which is implied in the nature of a miracle, should at the same time be inconsistent with it. This is to suppose, that the existence of a miracle is a contradiction in terms ; and as such indeed the author seems to treat it :
 “ A miracle supported by any human testi-
 “ mony is more properly a subject of derisi-
 “ on

“on than of argument* :” And again;
 “What have we to oppose to such a cloud of
 “witnesses, but the absolute impossibility or
 “miraculous nature of events †?” A modest reader can scarce look such assurance as this in the face: he will be apt to mistrust his own apprehension, and think there is more in these big words than he readily sees. The first reading gave me suspicions of this kind; but, having recovered myself, and taken courage to review it, I fear not to assert, that all the experience the author can bring will amount to neither proof nor argument against the belief of miracles. Let him, if he pleases, plead his own experience — that he has never seen or been witness to any miracle — that he has always found the course of nature to be the same and unchanged: but does this experience teach him, that the laws of nature are necessary and immutable — that there is no power in being sufficient to suspend or alter them — or that there can be no reasons to induce such a power to act? ’Till one or other of these can be proved from experience, it is no evidence in the present case, and instead of deciding the matter in question, is wholly impertinent and foreign to it. Can the
 southern

* P. 194.

† P. 195.

southern climates experience that there is no frost in the north? Or, can Mr. *Hume* experience that I have never seen fire kindled by a touch from ice? This negative evidence, tho' multiplied infinitely, would still be negative: and the fact last mentioned might be true, and capable of very easy proof from testimony, as I shall presently shew, though all the world should agree that they had never seen the like.

The uniformity of nature is no way impeached or brought in question by the supposition of miracles. The concurring testimony of mankind to the course of nature is not contradicted by those who have experienced contrary appearances in a few instances. The idea of a miracle unites and reconciles these seeming differences. By supposing the facts in question to be miraculous, the uniformity of nature is preserved, and the facts are accounted for upon another principle entirely consistent with it. Thus, experience teaches us that lead and iron are heavier than water: but a man, by projecting these heavy bodies, may make them swim in water, or fly in air. Should the same be done by any invisible power, it would be a miracle. But the uniformity of

C nature

nature is no more disturbed in this case than the former : nor is the general experience, which witnesses to the superior gravity of these bodies, any proof that they may not be raised in air and water by some invisible agent, as well as by the power of man. All that experience teaches is the comparative weight of these bodies. If, therefore, they are seen to float in mediums lighter than themselves, this must be the effect of art or strength : but, if it be done without any visible art or power, it must be done then by some art or power that is invisible ; that is, it must be miraculous. This is the process by which we infer the existence of miracles ; which is, therefore, so far from being contradicted by that experience upon which the laws of nature are established, that it is closely connected and stands in the fairest agreement with it.

The question then will remain—Whether any such invisible agents have ever interposed in producing visible effects ? Against the *possibility* of this, tho' the author is pleased to pronounce it impossible, he hath offered no argument (and, indeed, none can possibly be offered) : Against the *credibility* of it, the experience which he pleads is no argument
at

at all. This experience proves a course of nature ; but, whether this is ever interrupted, is still a question. This experience teaches what may be ordinarily expected from common causes, and in the common course of things : but miraculous interpositions, which we are enquiring after, are, by their nature and essence, extraordinary and out of the common course of nature. Miracles, if at all, are effects of an extraordinary power upon extraordinary occasions : consequently, common experience can determine nothing concerning them. That such occasions may arise, both in the natural and moral world, is easy to conceive. The greatest of natural philosophers * hath thought, that the frame of the world will want, in a course of time, the hand that made to re-touch and refit it. The greatest of moral philosophers † hath thought it a reasonable hope, that God would some time send a messenger from heaven to instruct men in the great duties of religion and morality.

As to the question of *fact*—Whether any such interpositions have been ever known or observed ? this must be tried, like all other historical facts, by the testimony of those

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who

* *Newton Opt.* Ed. Lat. p. 346.

† *Socrates in Platonis Alcibiade* 2^o, sub finem.

who relate it, and the credit of the first witnesses who have vouched it; and not, as this author would have it, by the testimony of others — of those who lived in distant times and places. There is mention of a comet, a little before the *Achaian* war, which appeared as big as the sun *. If this were well attested by the astronomers of that time, it would be trifling to object against it that the like had never been observed before or since. And just as pertinent is it to allege the experience of ages and countries against miracles which are said to be wrought in other times and other countries.

But, in truth, were the world to give evidence in the present question, they would, I am persuaded, depose very differently from what this author expects. A great part of mankind have given their testimony to the credibility of miracles: they have actually believed them. By this author's account, all the religions in the world have been founded upon this belief. If this be true, we have universal testimony to the credibility of miracles. How then can there be uni-

* *Seneca Nat. Quaest.* lib. 7. cap. 15. This I suppose to be the Comet which Dr. *John Keil*, in his *Astronomical Lectures*, mentions as appearing in the time of *Nero*.

universal experience against them? The author tells us, that we must judge of testimony by experience. It is more certain that we must judge of the experience of men by their testimony.

It is far from true that all religions have been founded on miracles. None but the *Christian* and *Jewish* appear to be so founded. But there is a sort of miracles, which men of all religions have agreed in believing, "A miracle," as this author says, "may be either discoverable by men, or not. This alters not its nature and essence*." Many things appear to us to be effected by natural means, the first springs of which may be moved by the immediate hand of God. But every such interposition, in overruling or giving a new direction to the course of nature, is, as the author allows, miraculous. If then Providence ever interposes in punishing exemplary wickedness, or in the support of eminent virtue — in averting evil, or bestowing good — these are miracles. But these have been universally believed. These blessings of heaven have been implored and acknowledged, and these judgments deprecated, in the publick and private

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* P. 181.

vate prayers of mankind, from the beginning of the world to this time.

We cannot indeed argue, from these supposed interpositions, that therefore Providence will interpose in a visible and sensible manner. But it follows, that such interpositions are possible; it follows, that they are credible. If we believe these miraculous interpositions, when they do not appear to our senses, what should hinder us from believing the like upon the report of our senses, or of credible persons who give witness to them? If there are general reasons for concealing these interpositions, may there not too be special reasons for signaling them at times to the senses and notice of mankind? It is certain, that, if any such reasons can be assigned, all that is difficult of belief in miracles will be removed. Now, tho' we cannot indeed look into the counsels of Providence, nor, without presumption, pronounce what is fit for God, in any supposed circumstance, to do; yet, in judging of past facts or miracles that are questioned, we can readily see whether any great end, worthy of God, hath been answered by them: and if this appear to be the case, it will create a presumption
in

in their favour: and if, farther, it shall seem that this end could not have been compassed by any other means, this will amount to some proof of their reality.

To see this matter in the clearest light, it may be proper to consider more distinctly the grounds of that credibility, which we allow, in different degrees, to historical facts. This depends, as I have said, on the credibility of the facts themselves, and on that of the historian or witnesses who relate them.

The credibility of any fact in itself, as this author frequently tells us, depends upon its analogy with the known course of nature *. But the powers of nature are so imperfectly known to us, that in most cases we argue with great uncertainty from this principle. A consequence of this is, that testimony is, for the most part, of much greater force to establish the truth of past facts, than experience. It would have been thought highly incredible a few years ago, that an animal might be propagated by cutting it in pieces — that you might, by dividing one living creature, give life to an hundred of the same species. Yet this sort

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of

* P. 165.

of *Hydra* has been discovered; and the fact, tho' contrary to the whole analogy of nature, was readily believed, when it had been experienced and testified by very few. In like manner, I have no doubt that the magnet loses its polarity in very cold latitudes. I believe this upon the testimony of one man *, tho' the experience of travellers in all climates before attests the contrary. Here the most uniform experience is outweighed by a single evidence. The reason is, that the experience of other countries is only a negative evidence in the question. The experience was indeed, before the fact was tried, a very strong presumption against it. The most cautious sailor would have ventured his fortune and life upon it. Yet is this presumption of no weight in the question of past fact, when compared with the slightest testimony †.

In

* Mr. *Ellis*, in his account of the North-west Passage.

† Every proposition or fact asserted is *certainly* true or false. By credible or probable we mean, not any thing real in the character of the proposition or fact, but only its appearance to us, or to the person who estimates this credibility. A thing is said to be credible, when it wants and is thought capable of proof — to be probable, when there appear more reasons for than against believing it. *Credible* is more than *possible*, and *impossible* more than *incredible*. Again,

In cases where a sufficient cause is assigned, an effect, however new and strange, may become credible, or even probable, in itself, without any testimony to support it. That fire should be kindled by a touch from ice, is contrary to the experience of some thousand years. But electricity is a cause given equal to the effect. From this time then the fact becomes credible, and even probable, tho' it were not tried and proved by any one witness.

In moral or intelligent agents we look for moral causes—for reasons or motives to induce them to act, as well as for the natural powers of acting. And, where both a final and efficient cause appear equal to the effect, the effect, however strange in itself, will become credible by testimony, if not probable
without

gain, *probable* is more than *credible*, and *incredible* is more than *improbable*. But these words are used in common language somewhat promiscuously. Thus, what is highly probable is said to be highly credible, and what is very improbable to be very incredible. Hence, there are all degrees of incredible and credible, before you arrive at probability. After this, credible and probable are the same, and admit again of all degrees, 'till you arrive at moral certainty. The same thing then may be credible in all these different
degrees

without it. It is possible for a man to swim across the *Hellepont*. The possibility of this fact will make it credible upon sufficient testimony:

degrees to different persons. That the earth is round — that it is constantly spinning about like a top, and travelling with a very swift motion, while the sun and the heavens stand still — This to one part of mankind is wholly incredible, and to another morally certain. The credibility, therefore, or comparative incredibility of any fact is, for the most part, too loose a bottom to ground any argument or inference upon. The same testimony may likewise be variously credible to different persons. But the evidence of this is far more distinct, and its force more easily ascertained. The truth of testimony, where it is doubtful, may be proved many different ways: that of doubtful facts can be made clear only by testimony, which is indeed, after all, the proper proof of facts.

Experience is the general testimony of mankind to general truths. Testimony, as it is here opposed to experience, is the attestation of particular persons to particular facts; the former of these witnesses to the credibility of facts; the latter gives evidence directly to their reality or existence. From the former we collect, that *May* is on this side the line a warmer month than *December*: but the certainty of this in particular instances is only to be proved, and the contrary may be proved, from the latter. We may indeed, as I have granted, in some cases, infer from the former of these the certainty or impossibility of facts. But even here this limitation or condition is always understood — that we know the whole of the case — that no cause intervenes, which is unknown or does not appear to us. And therefore,

timony: but, if a competent reason is assigned for this hazardous enterprize (such as the escaping certain death) this will make it

fore, in the strongest cases that can be supposed, experience is no bar to the evidence of testimony; because it is very possible, in almost all cases, that such cause may intervene. Should I see a stone climb up hill, or a piece of solid iron swim in water, I could not doubt the fact, how incredible soever in itself. Suppose the same to rest upon the testimony of others: I cannot, indeed, see with the eyes of other men; but I can see that they have eyes, as well as myself: and, if their veracity is proved, as I assert it may, even to our eyes and senses (I mean, by sensible and visible facts) I have then nearly as good evidence for the fact, as if I had seen it myself. I might perhaps conclude, that the effect was produced by some invisible agent; but, whether this can be discovered or not, the fact must still be admitted. All this is unwarily allowed by the author himself, in terms as strong as can be desired: "Suppose all authors in all languages agree, that from the first of *January*, 1600, there was a total darkness over the whole earth for eight days: Suppose that the tradition of this extraordinary event is still strong and lively among the people; that all travellers, who return from foreign countries, bring us accounts of the same tradition, without the least variation or contradiction: 'Tis evident, that our present philosophers, instead of doubting of that fact, ought to receive it for certain, and ought to search for the causes whence it might be derived." P. 199.

The author of the *Free Inquiry into the miraculous Powers of the primitive Church* has stated this matter in a very different

it credible upon the slightest testimony, or even probable without any.

The

ferent light. He supposes, that we have the evidence of sense for the natural credibility of facts, and seems to infer, that, when we argue from hence, we go upon surer ground than when we argue from testimony, which he represents as ever dark and doubtful, and amounting only to a reasonable presumption, at best: the contrary to which, in almost every particular, is, I think, the truth. As the principles laid down by this author are very general, and may be easily misapplied, beyond his intention, in the present question, it will not be improper to compare them with what has been said. “ The question concerning these miraculous powers depends,” says he, “ upon the joint credibility of the facts pretended to have been produced, and of the witnesses who attest them: if either part be infirm, their credit must sink in proportion, and, if the facts especially be incredible, must of course fall to the ground, because no force of testimony can alter the nature of things. The credibility of facts lies open to the trial of our reason and senses: but the credibility of witnesses depends on a variety of principles wholly concealed from us; and, tho’ in many cases it may reasonably be presumed, yet in none can it certainly be known: for it is common with men, out of crafty and selfish views, to dissemble and deceive: but plain facts cannot delude us — cannot speak any other language, or give any other information, than that of truth. The testimony, therefore, of facts, as it is offered to our senses, carries with it the surest instruction in all cases, which God, in the ordinary course of his providence has thought fit to appoint for the guidance
“ of

The result then is—that whatever is possible, or in the lowest degree credible, is capable

“ of human life *.” In answer to which, I shall not deny that the credibility of facts may in many cases be tried by our senses; but this is generally learnt from experience, or the common testimony of mankind: and, 2dly, this credibility, however learnt or proved, is no direct evidence of the reality or existence of any doubtful fact; since the fact may be highly credible, and yet never exist — may be in a great degree incredible, and yet certainly true. What the author calls *the testimony of facts offered to our senses*, is in this case only the testimony of our senses, or that of other men, to the existence, not of the fact in question, but of other facts that are supposed analogous or similar to it; which, tho’ in many cases it may amount to a very high presumption, yet is *in none a direct proof of any doubtful fact*: whereas, 3dly, testimony is a direct evidence to the existence or reality, not of similar facts, but of the fact itself: and therefore, in judging of past or distant facts, where we cannot have the evidence of our senses, the testimony of those who have this evidence is, not only the surest, but the only *method of instruction which Providence has appointed for our guidance thro’ life*. All that we *certainly know* of such facts is derived from this source. The truth of testimony is always presumed, where there are no particular reasons to suspect it. This presumption alone will give more weight, as we have seen, to a single testimony, and make it better evidence for the truth of facts, than a very high degree of presumption drawn from analogy is against it. 4thly, This presumption may be increased to any degree by the concurrence of other testimony; which

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pable of a proof from testimony—that the strongest presumption from experience is of little force against positive evidence—and that, where a cause is assigned equal to any effect, the event is rendered credible upon common testimony, and sometimes probable without any.

But there are, it is granted, many cases, which we may, from nature and experience, pronounce to be impossible. It is impossible that a fact or proposition should be true, when the cause assigned is unequal to the effect. Now, the proportion of causes to effects, the natural powers of agents, and the force of moral causes on the mind, we know to a good degree, from experience. If we cannot precisely determine the force of
natural

concurrence too is itself a distinct proof of the fact attested. Lastly, the veracity of every single witness may be proved by plain and indisputable facts, as will be seen more fully hereafter. If then improbable or incredible facts require stronger evidence to support them, the weight of testimony may be increased, and the proofs that support it multiplied, infinitely; and, consequently, whatever is not absolutely impossible may be thus proved. The force of testimony cannot indeed *alter the nature of things*: but it can make things improbable become probable—it can give credibility, and even certainty, to things that were before incredible.

natural agents, we can, in most cases, assign limits which they cannot pass. For instance: We cannot precisely mark out the bounds of human power; but we can, in all cases, say to what it does not extend. If the strength of men, at a medium, be equal to one, that of king *Augustus* * or *Hercules* may be equal to two; but it cannot be equal to two hundred. A physician may restore a dying man to health; but he cannot restore a dead man to life. Of all such events, as raising the dead, calming the winds or seas, curing diseases with a word, we may fairly pronounce, that they are impossible to human strength, and therefore, when imputed to it, are incredible; because a force equal to two cannot produce an effect equal to two hundred. In this case experience decides with sufficient authority against the fact. And this, I suppose, the author mistook for an argument against miracles.

But who ever attributed these facts to human power? Those who record, and those who believe, miracles, universally ascribe them to a power superior to man. They agree, that they far exceed all human strength,

* Late King of *Poland*.

strength, and therefore are an argument of the concurrence and agency of some superior power. Against the interposition of such superior power, experience, as we have seen, can determine nothing. If common experience does not attest or acknowledge such interpositions, the answer is given—common occasions do not call for them. The common wants of nature are provided for by the common course of nature. Extraordinary occasions only can call for extraordinary interpositions. Of these occasions we are not the proper judges: but, that many such may arise in the government of free agents, seems obvious even to us.

If men, by a bad use of their liberty, should sink themselves into a moral incapacity of answering the ends of their creation — if they should lose sight of God and religion and all the great motives to holiness and virtue, and this evil should become general and past all natural hopes of recovery — it is very supposeable that God may interpose, by a special act of his Providence, in restoring them to a capacity of serving him, and of attaining that happiness for which they were created. If virtue, and
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that knowledge which is necessary to it, are worthy the care of Providence — and if these were in danger of perishing out of the world — why should it be thought incredible that God should send a righteous man to teach the doctrines and enforce the duties of religion, with a clear and express authority? This mission of a prophet would be miraculous: but the miracle would not appear; and therefore other miracles would be necessary to attest it's truth. Superior knowledge and virtue are not sufficient to characterize a prophet: he must do such things as no man can do, except God were with him, before his mission or character will be acknowledged for divine. Here then is a reason, which, whenever it can be pleaded, will make miracles every way credible, and as capable of proof from testimony as any matter of fact whatsoever.

In the examination of past facts, if no such end appears to have been answered by the miracles alleged, this will be a strong presumption against them. On the other hand, if any great consequences have followed — if, for instance, it should appear from history, that natural religion had, when lost, by the help of these miracles,

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been revived in all it's purity, and established in many nations as the will of God — this will be a strong presumption in their favour : and, if there appear no other assignable cause, which could give birth to this great event, but the miracles pretended, this will be a good proof of their reality.

We come next to consider the credibility derived to facts from testimony. This depends in general upon the principles of human nature, which we can argue with the more certainty from, because we experience them in ourselves, as well as observe them in others. We are made naturally to love truth, and to hate and abhor falsehood and deceit. The shame of being detected in a lye, and the reproach that ever follows it, is a full proof of this. Even in matters of no moment, in the most transient discourse, where men think it unnecessary to attend to what they say, were there no temptation from vanity or a desire of pleasing, they would never deviate from truth. But this principle will operate far more strongly, where men are called upon to attend, have leisure to consider, and give their testimony deliberately : it will operate more strongly
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on good men than bad — in cases of great moment than in matters of indifference.

Could we be absolutely certain, in any case, that a man had no interest, real or supposed, in deceiving — that he had no motive to deceive — we might depend with absolute certainty upon the truth of his evidence. Now, this assurance we may have from circumstances that cannot deceive us. Incapable as we are of penetrating into all the reserves and recesses of the human mind, there is yet a certain and infallible test, by which the veracity of men may in many cases be tried. For example : If the person attesting gives up every known interest for the sake of his testimony, without any known prospect of advantage — if he is exposed by it to present sufferings, and is threatened with yet greater — if he persists under all the discouragements that can be thought of, and goes through a long series of evils, which, by receding from his testimony he might prevent — and, lastly, if he gives up life itself for a painful and ignominious death — this is such a proof of sincerity as cannot be resisted. In this case, we are not only assured that the witness is free from every corrupt bias, but that he

has the highest regard for truth. Nothing but a conscious sense of this, with a hope of a future reward from the God of truth, can support men under a loss of all things, and under the actual suffering of all the evils of life. A good man may give up his interest for the sake of truth: a bad man will sacrifice truth to interest: but no man will give up interest and truth together for nothing, or for the sake of falsehood, which is worse than nothing.

The maxims we here argue from are the most certain and uncontroverted of any in morality — That men act from motives, and that good, real or apparent, is the object, the motive and aim of every action. The laws by which the moral world is governed are as certain and infallible as those of the natural. The passions, appetites, and senses of mankind act, and are acted upon, with as much uniformity as any powers and principles in nature. That men should love falsehood rather than truth — that they should chuse labour and travail, shame and misery, before pleasure, ease, and esteem — is as much a violation of the laws of nature, as it is for lead or iron to hang unsupported in the air, or for the voice of a man
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to raise the dead to life : but this, I have granted to the author, is, not miraculous, but impossible, and shall therefore have his leave, I hope, to assert, that falsehood, thus attested, is impossible — in other words, that testimony, thus tried and proved, is infallible and certain.

It remains, indeed, that witnesses the most upright and unsuspected may be mistaken in their testimony : they may be deceived themselves ; and therefore their testimony, even thus proved, is not to be securely relied on. But, happily, miracles, at least all that we dispute with this author, are of such a nature, that it is impossible to be deceived about them. Facts that are visible and palpable to the senses of mankind, that are done in open day-light, that lie open to scrutiny and observation for a long time together, present witnesses must know whether they see or not. They who report them as eye-witnesses cannot be deceived themselves in the belief of them, however they may intend to deceive others.

I conclude then, that miracles, when there appears a sufficient cause for working them, are credible in themselves — that,

when they come under the cognizance of our senses, they are proper matter of testimony, and, when attested by witnesses who have sufficient opportunities of convincing themselves, and give sufficient proof of their conviction, have a right to command our faith.

And here I accept the author's alternative, without complaining of the insidious terms in which it is expressed. "The plain consequence," says he, "is (and 'tis a general maxim worthy of our attention) that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that it's falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish: and even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force which remains after deducting the inferior. — If the falsehood of any person's testimony would be more miraculous than the event which he relates, then, and not 'till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion *."

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By miraculous it is plain that the author here means, in the popular sense of the word, wonderful or incredible. I assert then, that miracles may be made so credible by circumstances and concurring facts, and so supported by testimony, that, if we reject them, we must believe things more incredible, or, as the author would have us speak, more miraculous than the miracles themselves.

The miracles I shall mention are those in the *Christian Gospel* — healing the sick without any visible means, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead to life, &c. all which are said to be performed by the power of God for ends the most worthy of himself, *viz.* to restore religion and morality to their true principles, and to establish the practice of them in the world. The character of those who were appointed to this work, and the doctrines which they taught, correspond perfectly with this design : great as it was, they undertook it with alacrity and confidence, declaring from the beginning that their commission was to go and teach all nations : the miracles which they attest, as giving authority to their doctrine, they assert from their own knowledge, as

what they saw with their eyes, and handled with their hands : the number of these facts, and the numbers attesting them, were very great : they concurred, without variation, in the same doctrine, and in the same testimony : they submitted, with the same courage and constancy, to the greatest persecutions and afflictions, in confirmation of their truth ; and, when called to it (as many of them were) laid down their lives for it's sake : they foresaw from the beginning the opposition they met with, and foretold, with the fullest assurance, their success against it : and the event justified their predictions ; the religion they taught was in a short time established in a great part of the world.

Here, now, the attempt itself, if not spirited and supported by truth, is wholly strange and unaccountable. That men of low birth and education should conceive a design of new-modelling the religion of all nations, and reforming their manners, by the laws of temperance, purity, and charity — that bad men should concur in an end so great and godlike, or good men in means so impious as fraud and imposture — that men of craft or address should chuse
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for the hero of their story one who was chronicled as a malefactor, and who had been put to death by the consent of a whole people — one, too, that had abused their confidence, and misled them by false hopes into an endless train of miseries — all this is contrary to nature, and therefore, by the author's rule, impossible.

The zeal with which they carried on this design, traversing seas and kingdoms, without rest, and without weariness — a zeal which could not be exceeded by the most righteous men in the most righteous cause — this, if not prompted by duty and a strong conviction of the truths they taught, is still more incredible.

The excellency of the religion they taught, in its worship and morality far surpassing all human wisdom and philosophy, and the sole end of which is to make men honest, sincere, and virtuous, if it be the work of ignorance and fraud, is equally strange and mysterious.

The success of this design is yet a greater miracle. In this chain of wonders the event is the most miraculous part. The
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establishment of the Gospel in an hundred different nations, it's victory over *Jews* and *Gentiles*, over the power and policy of the wisest and greatest people, over the pride of learning and the obstinacy of ignorance, over the prejudices of religion and those of sin and irreligion, is an event the most wonderful of any in history. But this is a miracle which we see before our eyes : it is a miraculous fact that must be ascribed to a miraculous cause. Even granting the truth of the Gospel miracles, the instruments in propagating it were so unequal to the work, that nothing but the power of God, accompanying and working with them, can account for it's success. It was still a miracle that it should prosper in their hands. But, without either truth or providence to support it, this success would be more than miraculous — it would be impossible.

The testimony directly given to these miracles is strongly confirmed by the character of the witnesses, who, as far as appears even from the testimony of their enemies, were unblameable in their lives and manners — men of conscience and religion. Their writings breathe a spirit of piety, a zeal for God and good works, that is not equalled
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by any writings in the world : they carry in them such marks of candor, truth, and simplicity, as cannot be imitated : all which can never consist with the daring impiety of usurping the most sacred of all characters, and preaching a false religion to the world.

The numbers that engaged in this design, tho' dispersed in different regions, agreed perfectly in the same report. It was in the power of any of these, or of the accomplices that must be concerned with them, to defeat the whole by discovering the fraud : and it cannot be, that not one should, by fear or interest, persuasion or torture, be prevailed on to discover it.

They put their testimony to the trial, by claiming a power of working miracles themselves : they displayed this power frequently and publickly, and so submitted their truth to the eyes and senses of all about them. This pretence, if false, must have defeated the most probable and hopeful scheme ; if true, it was no more than necessary to the difficulties of this. The event was — great numbers were every day converted to the faith. But this conduct cannot, any more than

than the event, be reconciled to the character or supposition of imposture.

Lastly, they gave the highest proof that can be given to the veracity of testimony, by going thro' the fiery trial of persecution, in all it's various forms of imprisonment, torture, and death. This began with the very beginning of Christianity. They saw it evidently before their eyes, and plainly devoted themselves from the first to a life of sufferings and affliction. They gave up ease and security, country, kindred, family, and friends, to be treated every-where with contempt and contumely, to conflict with poverty and want, to be persecuted from city to city, sentenced to imprisonment and stripes, and, at last, to die by stoning, by the sword, or the cross. But this, in support of falsehood and wrong, is so contrary to human nature, that it is absolutely incredible.

The supposition then, that the miracles of the Gospel are false, is full of wonders, prodigies, things unnatural, and which experience, the author's criterion in matters of fact, pronounces to be impossible.

And

And what now is that contrariety to nature, which is pleaded against the possibility of miracles? “A miracle,” the author tells us, “may be accurately defined a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity or by the interposal of some invisible agent *.” But this definition is neither accurate nor consistent with itself. The laws of nature are the laws of God: and, if God should occasionally change or invert any of these, there is no law, that I know of, against it — no law of God or nature broken by it. But, in fact, where miracles are supposed, there is no change made in these laws. I have shewn, that all that is unnatural in miracles is only appearance. There is nothing contrary to nature in supposing the dead to be raised, or the winds controlled by a power equal to the effect. It was no way contrary to the nature of God to reveal his will to mankind, in order to reform their corruptions, and to conduct them to virtue and happiness. On the contrary, this might be piously hoped for from his wisdom and goodness. It was no way contrary to the nature and condition

* P. 181.

on of men. It appears from the history of mankind, that natural religion was at this time universally corrupted, and that no other probable means were left of restoring it. Reason and philosophy had tried their strength in vain. It was, therefore, on the part of man, highly expedient and desirable. In fact, to this revelation, whether real or pretended, and to no other cause, it is owing, that the great truths of nature, concerning God, a Providence, and a future state, are now so widely spread, and that half the world, instead of dumb idols, are serving the living God : and, if all the good ends, that might be expected, are not yet answered by it, yet the seed of the word is sown, the foundations of true religion are laid, and there is hope that it will in time enlarge it's borders, and prevail, where it is received, with more effect and influence. It cannot be denied, that the Gospel is an adequate provision for the wants, a remedy for all the infirmities of mankind. There is nothing, that can be wished for in a rule of duty, that is not comprehended in it. The miracles, then, that attest it, are accounted for to our reason : we have God, the cause of all things, for their author :

thor : and a sufficient reason is assigned for the divine interposition. And this will, at the same time, account for all the wonders that followed : the actions, sufferings, and success of the Apostles will, upon this scheme, appear easy, consistent, and natural.

But, if this account be not admitted, these will remain so many contradictions to nature and experience, and it will lie upon the author to reconcile them to our belief. If the common motives to human actions, interest, passion, and prejudice, cannot be pleaded in answer to these difficulties, what other account can be given of them ? Some cause must be assigned adequate to the effect. For men to act without motives is as unnatural, as it is for a body to sink without weight — to act against the force of motives is as contrary to nature, as it is for a stone to ascend against the laws of gravity. Hear what this author says himself in another Essay : “ We cannot make use of a
 “ more convincing argument, than to prove
 “ that the actions ascribed to any person
 “ are directly contrary to the course of na-
 “ ture, and that no human motives, in
 “ such

“such circumstances, could ever induce
“him to such a conduct *.”

The author tells us, that in this case we must reject the greater miracle. But miracle is too soft a name for these inconsistencies. Could he shew, that God, or some invisible agent, had interposed in confounding the reason and understanding of all that preached or believed the Gospel, in changing their nature, and giving a contrary direction to their passions, affections, and instincts, they would then be miracles, and proper objects of our belief. But this I shall presume impossible to be proved, because no end can be assigned for such interposition, but merely to deceive mankind — an end so unworthy of God, and contrary to the perfections of his nature, that we may pronounce it impossible for him to promote, or even to permit it to take effect.

Here, then, I may call upon the author, in his own words, to lay his hand upon his heart, and declare, whether the miracles of the Gospel could possibly have been better attested, if true — whether there is any one
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condition wanting that can add credibility to them — whether there is any thing so contrary to nature in these miracles, as in the testimony given, and the belief gained, to them, if false — whether it is not easier to believe the miracles true, than that so many miraculous consequences (a natural effect of true miracles) should arise from them, if false — or, lastly, whether it be not more credible that God should work these miracles for so great an end as that of giving birth and establishment to Christianity, than that he should work more and greater miracles to confound and deceive mankind. When he has balanced his account of the impossibility of miracles with the evidence for those of the Gospel, and subtracted the former from the latter, *this subtraction will certainly amount to an entire annihilation.*

Let us now see the poor case which the author puts at last to illustrate and crown his argument, “ When any one tells me, “ that he saw a dead man restored to life, “ I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable that this person should either deceive or be deceived,

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“ or

“ or that the fact he relates should really
 “ have happened : I weigh the one miracle
 “ against the other, and, according to the
 “ superiority which I discover, I pronounce
 “ my decision, and always reject the great-
 “ er miracle *.” The author’s argument
 requires him to prove, that no miracles,
 however circumstanced, can be made credi-
 ble by any testimony whatsoever. But, in
 the case supposed, the miracle has not one
 circumstance to make it credible, nor the
 testimony, one condition to confirm it’s
 truth. A dead man we may suppose raised
 to life without any reason, use, or end what-
 soever : and a dead man may be raised for
 some extraordinary purpose of Providence,
 as to give authority and character to the
 special messengers of God. Now, tho’ the
 former of these cannot be made credible by
 the naked testimony of one man, the latter,
 one may still suppose, may be made credi-
 ble by the attestation of many ; especially
 if they give proof, that they were neither
 deceived themselves, nor intended to deceive
 others. If one man, unassisted, cannot lift
 a weight of twenty tons, does it follow that
 twenty men cannot with the help of en-
 gines,

gines, lift the weight of one? I agree with the author, that, when a man is said to rise, like the ghost in *Prince Edward**, only to set again, it is more credible, that the testimony is false, than the miracle true: but, when I see an effect worthy of Providence, in which the religion, virtue, and morality of a great part of mankind are concerned, brought about by the belief of this, or such-like miracles, and find, upon inquiry, that this miracle is attested by a great number of persons who lived and died confessors and martyrs to it, the falsehood of such testimony appears to me far more miraculous than such a miracle.

The author puts the same case, with the addition of some particulars, in the second part of his Essay: “ Suppose that all the
 “ historians who treat of *England* should
 “ agree, that, on the first of *January*, 1600,
 “ queen *Elizabeth* died — that, both before
 “ and after her death, she was seen by her
 “ physicians and the whole court, as is usual
 “ with persons of her rank — that her suc-
 “ cessor was acknowledged and proclaimed
 “ by parliament — and that, after having
 E 2 “ been

* A late play, called *Edward the Black Prince*.

“ been interred a month, she again appear-
 “ ed, took possession of the throne, and go-
 “ verned *England* three years : I must con-
 “ fess I should be surprized at the concur-
 “ rence of so many odd circumstances, but
 “ should not have the least inclination to
 “ believe so miraculous an event *.” Here,
 again, the fact supposed is the strangest and
 most unaccountable that the author could
 well conceive, because no final cause appears
 to make it in any degree credible. But when
 was any such fact attested by historians ?
 If the author thinks the story incredible, I
 think it as incredible that any good historian
 should relate it : if he thinks it incredible,
 because it is a miracle, I think it incredible
 that God should work such a miracle for
 nothing.

But the importance of miracles is, it
 seems, with the author, a thing of no con-
 sideration : this, which we considered as a
 circumstance that gives the highest credibi-
 lity to the Gospel miracles, is, at last, the
 very reason why he rejects them as incredi-
 ble. “ I beg,” says he, “ that the limita-
 “ tion here made may be remarked, when
 “ I say,

“ I say, that a miracle can never be proved,
 “ so as to be a foundation of a system of
 “ religion ; for I own, that otherwise, there
 “ may possibly be miracles, or violations of
 “ the usual course of nature, of such a kind,
 “ as to admit of proof from human testi-
 “ mony, tho’ perhaps it will be impossible
 “ to find any such in all the records of
 “ history *.” This concession is, surely,
 very remarkable. Is it not plainly giving
 up the argument ? For, if miracles may be
 wrought in cases of less moment, why may
 they not in greater ? Or, is religion the
 last and least of all things in the opinion of
 this author ? I confess myself at a loss to
 guess what can be his intention in this place.
 If, in compromise for the other miracles
 which he here grants us unasked, he expects
 us to give up all that have religion for
 their object, it will indeed answer his pur-
 pose very well. He may grant other mira-
 cles possible, and yet make good his argu-
 ment against them. But these are not so
 easily dealt with. The surest way not to
 believe them is not to examine them. And
 this he wisely recommends as the best ex-
 pedient that has been tried against them.

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“ If

“ If a miracle,” says he, “ be ascribed to
 “ any new system of religion, men, in all
 “ ages, have been so much imposed on by
 “ ridiculous stories of that kind, that this
 “ very circumstance would be a full proof
 “ of a cheat, and sufficient, with all men
 “ of sense, not only to make them reject
 “ the fact, but even reject it without farther
 “ examination *.” This, indeed, is a
 short way with religion and miracles ; and
 we must own, that the author hath found
 out at last a decisive argument against
 them.

* P. 200.

PART



P A R T II.

LITTLE as it is that the author has done in the first part of his Essay, he seems to think it more than enough, and that half his pains might have been spared: “ In the foregoing reasoning, we have supposed, that the testimony upon which a miracle is founded may possibly amount to an entire proof, and that the falsehood of that testimony would be a kind of prodigy. But ’tis easy to shew, that we have been a great deal too liberal in our concessions, and that there never was a miraculous event, in any history, established on so full an evidence *.” But, if the author was so sure of his strength, why this *corps de reserve*, a body of troops that have been for ever harraßed, and are yet untired, in the service of infidelity ?

The first of these veteran bands is drawn up as follows: “ There is not,” says he,

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“ to

* P. 183.

“ to be found, in all history, any miracle
 “ attested by a sufficient number of men
 “ of such unquestioned good sense, educa-
 “ tion, and learning, as to secure us against
 “ all delusion in themselves — of such un-
 “ doubted integrity, as to place them be-
 “ yond all suspicion of any design to deceive
 “ others — of such credit and reputation
 “ in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great
 “ deal to lose, in case of being detected in
 “ a falsehood — and, at the same time, at-
 “ testing facts performed in such a public
 “ manner, and in so celebrated a part of
 “ of the world, as to render the detection
 “ unavoidable: all which circumstances are
 “ requisite to give us a full assurance in the
 “ testimony of men *.” The reader will
 allow me to suppose, that the author has in
 view, both here and throughout his Essay,
 the *Christian* miracles, which we have been
 considering. Now, the objections here made
 have been so frequently and fully answered
 by the advocates of Christianity, that it is
 quite piteous to see the author, after pro-
 claiming a victory, calling in such poor
 auxiliaries to his relief.

As

* P. 183.

As to the first condition here required, there never was perhaps a fact directly attested by so many witnesses as the miracles in question. We have still upon record the express depositions of many in the writings of the Apostles. The conversion of every single person to Christianity was, in truth, a clear and precise testimony to these facts; for this religion was wholly built upon them. Now, besides the twelve Apostles and seventy Disciples chosen to preach the Gospel, a great number more were converted by the miracles and resurrection of *Christ*. But those that gave this witness to the miracles of the Apostles were without number. Never was there a doctrine that spread so swiftly through the world, or that gained so many present and immediate witnesses to its truth.

The Apostles and first Disciples had not, many of them, the advantages of education and learning. But what learning is required to enable men to see with their eyes and hear with their ears? The miracles they attest were plain facts, the objects of sense. Folly itself could not be deceived in them: and sure folly could never so successfully

cessfully deceive. These men, illiterate as they were and void of art or eloquence, did what this author, with all his arguments, will never be able to do: they got the better of all the religions in the world about them, and established their own in different and distant countries. They had, therefore, we may hope, sense enough to testify what their eyes had seen and their hands had handled.

They had not perhaps any great reputation to lose. But the good name of a poor man is as dear to him as that of the greatest. If they had no publick character to lose, they had publick infamy to dread: and this they incurred, not by being detected in a falsehood, but by persevering in the truth. If it was little that they gave up to follow *Christ*, it was, however, all that they had. And what they gained was a negative quantity, and must be put to the side of their losses: they gained hunger and thirst, toil and labour, watchings and fastings, scorn and reproach, scourgings and death. They lost, then, enough to evidence their sincerity. They gave every proof, that ever was given by man, to the truth of their testimony.

As

As to the notoriety of the facts, they were done in the most publick manner — in places of constant resort — many of them in *Jerusalem*, at times of the greatest concourse: and, what is more, they were done in direct opposition to the prejudices of all that saw them — before the most vigilant and powerful enemies, who did not, as this author tells us wise men commonly do, “think the matter too inconsiderable to “deserve their attention *,” but exerted their utmost industry and authority in suppressing this new religion; putting its head and leader to death, suborning false witnesses to discredit him and his miracles, and proceeding immediately, by imprisoning some, and killing others, to deter and disperse his followers. These miracles, therefore, were wrought in the very place where their detection was most certain and unavoidable; and the testimony given to them was given in the same publick manner and in the same place.

The author is well aware, that the testimony of the Apostles and first Christians,
if

* P. 198.

if the miracles were false (I mean, the fact
 of giving such testimony) and the miracu-
 lous events that followed in consequence
 of them, will be thought, upon reflection,
 at least as incredible as the miracles them-
 selves: and therefore, to abate our wonder
 on this head, he observes, “ secondly, that
 “ there is a principle in human nature,
 “ which, if strictly examined, will be found
 “ to diminish extremely the assurance we
 “ might have from human testimony in
 “ any kind of prodigy. The maxim, by
 “ which we commonly conduct ourselves
 “ in our reasonings, is, that the objects of
 “ which we have no experience resemble
 “ those of which we have — that what we
 “ have found to be most usual is always
 “ most probable. But tho’, in proceeding
 “ by this rule, we readily reject any fact
 “ that is unusual or incredible in an ordi-
 “ nary degree, yet, in advancing farther,
 “ the mind observes not always the same
 “ rule; but when any thing is affirmed
 “ utterly absurd and miraculous, it rather
 “ the more readily admits such a fact upon
 “ account of that very circumstance which
 “ ought to destroy all it’s authority. The
 “ passion of surprize and wonder arising
 “ from miracles, being an agreeable emo-
 “ tion

“ tion, gives a sensible tendency towards
 “ the belief of those events from which it
 “ is derived *.”

The love of novelty is, indeed, a natural passion; it is no other than the love of knowledge, which God hath implanted in the mind for the wisest reasons: and for the same reasons we may be assured that he hath not laid snares to betray us into error, and much less hath placed in us a principle, as the author here supposes, the tendency of which is to make us believe things, merely because they are incredible. “ With
 “ what greediness,” saith he, “ are the
 “ miraculous accounts of travellers received,
 “ their descriptions of sea and land mon-
 “ sters, their relations of wonderful adven-
 “ tures, strange men, and uncouth man-
 “ ners !” It is true that every new discovery gratifies our love of knowledge, and gives pleasure to the mind: but it must have the appearance of truth to do so. Tho’ we love to be informed, we do not love to be deceived. A single miracle would risk the credit of the best-esteemed travels. But, according to this author’s principle, the
 voyage

voyage to *Lilliput* or *Laputa* must meet with more credit than that of *Anson* or *Ellis*.

But, if the love of novelty will not reconcile us to miracles, that of religion will make us believe any thing. “ If the spirit
“ of religion joins itself to the love of wonder, there is an end of common sense *.” If the author means, that men are more apt to believe miracles in the cause of religion than in any other case, he is so far in the right. Where should men expect or believe miraculous interpositions, but where it is most worthy of God to interpose? But it does not follow, that religion is a friend to false miracles, or an enemy to common sense. On the contrary, right notions of the divine nature and perfections, which religion teaches, are a necessary help to distinguish true miracles from false. Now, the *Jews*, in general, were better instructed in these points than the wisest of the Heathens. The men of *Athens* were far more superstitious than the most ignorant of the *Hebrews*. The false wonders of magick, witchcraft, and necromancy, these were taught by their law to hold in contempt

* P. 185.

tempt, and, consequently, were less liable to be practised upon by appearances of this sort. And, of the Apostles and first Christians, it is certain, that they had all the security against delusion and error of this kind, that a rational piety and the noblest sentiments of God and a Providence could give them.

But “ a religionist may be an enthusiast,
 “ and imagine he sees what has no reality :
 “ he may know his narration to be false,
 “ and yet persevere in it, with the best intentions in the world, for the sake of
 “ promoting so holy a cause : or, even
 “ where this delusion has no place, vanity,
 “ excited by so strong a temptation, operates on him more powerfully than on
 “ the rest of mankind in any other circumstances, and self-interest with equal force :
 “ his auditors may not have, and commonly have not, sufficient judgment to canvass
 “ his evidence ; what judgment they have
 “ they renounce upon principle in these
 “ sublime and mysterious subjects *.” Here, it is confessed, the author has touched upon a very powerful and fruitful source of error.

Men

Men, whose passions are stronger than their reason, will be guilty of excess in religion as well as in other things. A zeal for opinions frequently makes men conclude their own cause to be the cause of God; and, from wishing that Heaven may declare in their favour, they are easily led to believe such interpositions upon the slightest testimony. But, tho' this principle will make men believe false miracles, it will not overpower their senses, or make them see what has no reality. The *French* prophets were extravagant enough to expect that one of their principal teachers would come to life again; but, with all their enthusiasm, none could believe that he saw this miracle: on the contrary, this disappointment opened their eyes, and the pretence to miracle ruined their cause. Nor can I allow, with the author, that men of the best intentions can propagate a known falsehood for the sake of truth. An honest man may be hasty in believing; but he cannot be a deceiver or impostor. It is certain, the religion of *Christ* disdains such pious frauds, and his Apostles have forbid and condemned them in terms as severe as language can express: nor is it a principle in this religion, as this writer would insinuate, that men should renounce
their

their judgment in inquiries of this sort : on the contrary, they are enjoined carefully to examine the truth of miracles and doctrines, before they believe them.

But, granting the author's principles in their full extent, the miracles of the Gospel will be no way affected by them : For, first, the Apostles are free from all tincture and appearance of enthusiasm ; witness the writings which they have left behind them, and that system of doctrines and morals contained in them : in their piety nothing over passionate, rapturous, or ecstatic appears, but all is rational, sober, and temperate : their zeal for their master and his religion, never transports them into complaints or invectives against his enemies or their own, or into any strained eulogiums or panegyrics upon his character : they recite all that is wonderful in his actions, without exclamation, without vehement asseveration, with an undoubting, unguarded simplicity, that is highly singular and remarkable : their whole conduct, in like manner, was void of ostentation, steady, uniform, and regular throughout : they were not only consistent each with himself (which a fanatic spirit seldom is) but all

F

pursued

pursued the same plan, without varying or
 change, with the most perfect harmony and
 agreement. And, secondly, whatever influ-
 ence, from passion or prejudice, the wit-
 nesses to Christianity were under, this ope-
 rated the contrary way, and must dispose
 them to reject, rather than receive, the mi-
 racles: the Apostles themselves were *Jews*,
 and zealous of the traditions and customs
 of their ancestors: the other converts, whe-
 ther *Jews* or Pagans, were prejudiced, as
 strongly as they could be, by religion,
 against the Gospel: bigotry and enthusiasm
 rose up every-where in persecution against
 it; nothing but reason and conviction could
 induce men to declare for it: every passion,
 every interest, and every prejudice persua-
 ded against this belief: and, in fact, every
 single conversion to it was not barely the
 testimony of an unprejudiced judge, but
 the testimony of an enemy to it's truth.

“ The wise,” says the author, in another
 place, “ lend a very academick faith to eve-
 “ ry report which favours the passion of the
 “ reporter, whether it magnifies his coun-
 “ try, his family, or himself, or in any other
 “ way strikes in with his natural inclinati-
 “ ons and propensities. But what greater
 “ temp-

“ temptation than to appear a missionary,
 “ a prophet, an ambassador from heaven ?
 “ Who would not encounter many dangers
 “ and difficulties to attain so sublime a
 “ character * ? ” Where this character is
 indeed attended with honour and respect, it
 will be natural for ambitious men to desire
 it. But the head and leader of this sect had
 been every-where reviled and persecuted,
 and was crucified as a malefactor : his fol-
 lowers every where shared the same fate.
 What temptation was there to appear his
 prophet or ambassador ? What vanity or
 self-interest was gratified by it ?

But thirdly, the author tells us, “ it
 “ forms a very strong presumption against
 “ all supernatural and miraculous relations,
 “ that they are always found chiefly to
 “ abound amongst ignorant and barbarous
 “ nations ; or, if a civilized people has ever
 “ given admission to any of them, that peo-
 “ ple will be found to have received them
 “ from ignorant and barbarous ancestors,
 “ who transmitted them with that inviola-
 “ ble sanction and authority which always
 “ attends ancient and received opinions † . ”

F 2

This

* P. 196.

† P. 186.

This argument, we presume, has been already answered. The miracles of the Gospel were, as we have said, performed where they were most suspected. The *Jews* were by no means a barbarous people, and they were freer from superstition than any other nation in the world. These miracles were immediately canvassed with all the severity that the prejudice of enemies could suggest. Some who were healed of their diseases were sent immediately to the priests, on purpose, as it seems, that they might undergo the strictest inquisition. Others were called before the council, examined, and threatened, and every means tried to refute and silence them. This religion did not get strength in the dark, and then adventure itself by degrees into the light: it was openly proclaimed, from the first, in the temple, and in the synagogue, where the *Jews* always resorted: and, when the Apostles had filled *Jerusalem* and *Judæa* with their doctrines, *Rome* and *Athens* were some of the next scenes of their ministry.

Under this head we are entertained with a long story from the *Pseudomantis* of *Lucian*. “It was,” saith the author, “a wise policy in that cunning impostor, *Alexander*,
“der,

“ *der*, who, tho’ now forgotten, was once
 “ so famous, to lay the first scene of his
 “ impostures in *Paphlagonia*, where, as *Lu-*
 “ *cian* tells us, the people were extremely
 “ ignorant and stupid, and ready to swal-
 “ low even the grossest delusion. People at
 “ a distance, who are weak enough to think
 “ the matter at all worth inquiry, have no
 “ opportunity of receiving better informa-
 “ tion. The stories come magnified to them
 “ by an hundred circumstances. Fools are
 “ industrious to propagate the delusion ;
 “ while the wise and learned are contented,
 “ in general, to deride it’s absurdity, with-
 “ out informing themselves of the particu-
 “ lar facts, by which it may be distinctly
 “ refuted. And thus the impostor above-
 “ mentioned was enabled to proceed, from
 “ his ignorant *Paphlagonians*, to the inlist-
 “ ing votaries even among the *Grecian* phi-
 “ losophers and men of the most eminent
 “ rank and distinction in *Rome* — nay,
 “ could engage the attention of that sage
 “ emperor, *Marcus Aurelius*, so far as to
 “ make him trust the success of a military
 “ expedition to his delusive prophecies *.”
 But what, if this famous impostor never
 pretended to miracles ? It is said, indeed,

F 3

that

that he had his emissaries in distant countries, who reported this; among other things, to his honour: but there is no appearance in his history of his ever counterfeiting or pretending to this power. It was his policy not to hazard his reputation on so dangerous an issue. Ignorant and stupid as his *Paphlagonians* were, it might have been too much for all his art to impose false facts upon their eyes and senses. He had, by a bold and successful cheat of another kind, established his character among this people, who, *Lucian* tells us, differed from brutes in nothing but their outward form. He had the fortune too to gain the ear of a famous *Roman* general, who, by the same author's account, was formed to be the dupe of every pretender. This seems to have got him some name in *Rome*. But I find none, that deserved to be called philosophers, among his votaries. It is certain, that the sight of a *Christian* or an *Epicurean* disconcerted all his management. They were always drove from his presence, having the confidence, no doubt, to deride the prophet and his oracles. Every one must believe, upon the representation here made, that the emperor *Antonine* had undertaken the expedition mentioned at the
infi-

instigation of this impostor, or, at least, had concerted measures with him for pursuing it. But the oracle given out by this pretended prophet was voluntary and unasked, in order, if the event had happened, as was probable, to increase his own credit. And, superstitious as this great emperor and philosopher was, he did nothing, in pursuance of it, but what the wisest general might have done to humour the superstition and folly of his soldiers, and to inspire them with a confidence of victory. It no-where appears that he hazarded the least point, or altered any one of his measures, in consequence of it. But, if it were true that this impudent impostor had this learned emperor and the schools of *Greece* among his admirers, this would only prove how much the wisest part of mankind were enslaved by superstition, before Christianity released them from it.

The author adds, as a fourth reason which diminishes the authority of prodigies,
 “ that there is no testimony for any, even
 “ those which have not been expressly de-
 “ tected, that is not opposed by an infinite
 “ number of witnesses ; so that not only
 “ the miracle destroys the credit of the tes-
 F 4 “ timony,

“ timony, but even the testimony destroys
 “ itself. To make this the better under-
 “ stood, let us consider, that, in matters of
 “ religion, whatever is different is contrary,
 “ and that ’tis impossible the religions of
 “ antient *Rome*, of *Turky*, of *Siam*, and of
 “ *China* should, all of them, be established
 “ on any solid foundation. Every miracle,
 “ therefore, pretended to have been wrought
 “ in any of these religions (and all of them
 “ abound in miracles) as it’s direct scope is
 “ to establish the particular system to which
 “ it is attributed, so it has the same force,
 “ tho’ more indirectly, to overthrow every
 “ other system : in destroying a rival-sys-
 “ tem, it likewise destroys the credit of
 “ those miracles on which that system was
 “ established : so that all the prodigies of
 “ different religions are to be regarded as
 “ contrary facts, and the evidence of these
 “ prodigies, whether weak or strong, as
 “ opposite to each other*.” This argu-
 ment, he is apprehensive, will appear too
 subtle and refined : but the only fault of it
 is, that it has no foundation in truth. The
 author cannot name a single miracle, that
 was ever offered as a test of any of these
 religions, before their establishment, or to
 autho-

* P. 190.

authorize any pretended prophet to teach such religion. *Mahomet* expressly disclaims this power in many places of his *Koran*. It appears from his manner of speaking of it, that he knew what advantage this pretence would give to his cause, and even felt the want of it : yet, with all the assistance that art and power could give him, he durst not hazard so dangerous an experiment. There is a wide difference betwixt establishing false miracles, by the help of a false religion, and establishing a false religion by the help of false miracles. Nothing is more easy than the former of these, or more difficult than the latter. The author would make us believe that miracles are to be met with in almost every page of antient history : “ When
 “ we peruse the first histories of all nations,
 “ we are apt to imagine ourselves transport-
 “ ed into some new world, where the whole
 “ frame of nature is disjointed, and every
 “ element performs it’s operations in a dif-
 “ ferent manner from what it does at pre-
 “ sent. Battles, revolutions, pestilences,
 “ famines, and deaths, are never the effects
 “ of those natural causes which we experi-
 “ ence *.” But the truth is, they are very
 thinly sown in the writings of the heathens.

Portents

Portents and prodigies I call not by that name. These are to be accounted for from natural causes, or owe their existence to a frightened or disturbed imagination. Of miracles, properly speaking, there are very few upon record: most of these are given up, by the historians who relate them, as vulgar fables, unworthy of belief, and none are so attested as to make them in any degree credible. Of this the author has undesignedly given us a full proof in the story which immediately follows:

“ One of the best-attested miracles in all
 “ profane history is that which *Tacitus* re-
 “ ports of *Vespasian*, who cured a blind man
 “ in *Alexandria* by means of his spittle, and
 “ a lame man by the mere touch of his foot,
 “ in obedience to a vision of the god *Sera-*
 “ *pis*, who had enjoined them to have re-
 “ course to the emperor for these miracu-
 “ lous and extraordinary cures*.” This,
 the author seems to insinuate, is as well at-
 tested as any *Christian* miracle, and may be
 made as good an argument for the religion
 of the antient *Egyptians* as any miracle for
 any religion whatsoever: “ Every circum-
 “ stance,” says he “ adds weight to the tes-
 “ timony,

“timony, and might be displayed at large
 “with all the force of argument and elo-
 “quence, if any one were now concerned
 “to enforce the evidence of that exploded
 “and idolatrous superstition.” The occasi-
 on being so tempting, he has tried his hand,
 and shewn us how far this miracle may be
 paralleled with those of the Gospel: “The
 “gravity, solidity, age, and probity of so
 “great an emperor, who, thro’ the whole
 “course of his life, conversed in a familiar
 “way with his friends and courtiers, and
 “never affected those extraordinary airs of
 “divinity assumed by *Alexander* and *Deme-*
 “*trius* — The historian a cotemporary wri-
 “ter, noted for candor and veracity, and,
 “withal, the greatest and most penetra-
 “ting genius, perhaps, of all antiquity,
 “and so free from any tendency to supersti-
 “tion and credulity, that he even lies un-
 “der the contrary imputation of atheism
 “and profaneness — The persons, from
 “whose testimony he related the miracle,
 “of established character for judgment and
 “veracity (as we may well suppose) eye-
 “witnesses of the fact, and confirming
 “their verdict, after the *Flavian* family
 “were despoiled of the empire, and could
 “no longer give any reward, as the price
 “of

“ of a lye : *Utrumque, qui interfuere, nunc*
 “ *quoque memorant, postquam nullum mendacis*
 “ *pretium.* To which if we add the publick
 “ nature of the fact, as related, it will ap-
 “ pear, that no evidence can well be supposed
 “ stronger for so gross and so palpable a
 “ falsehood.” As to the character of this
 wise emperor, *Suetonius*, who has wrote his
 life, tells us, that he had long before this
 conceived hopes of the empire, from certain
 idle dreams and omens, of which he has
 reckoned up eight or ten, as ridiculous as
 any in history ; that immediately before this,
 when he was now proclaimed emperor by
 some of the legions, and had strengthened
 himself by several alliances, he condescend-
 ed, notwithstanding his probity and gravity,
 to give out a miracle upon his own autho-
 rity, to make himself considerable in the
 eyes of the people ; pretending that, in the
 temple of *Serapis*, where he went alone, *de*
firmitate imperii auspicium facturus, one *Ba-*
filides, who was known at the time to be
 far distant and unable to travel, had ap-
 peared to him, offering him crowns and
 garlands — a certain omen (as he and his
 courtiers interpreted the word *Basilides*) of
 the royal dignity. As for the credit of the
 historian, he was no witness of the fact,
 nor,

nor, for ought we know, ever conversed with those that saw it; and the testimony he gives to it does by no means amount to a proof that he believed it himself. To what purpose, then, is the character he gives us of his veracity, penetrating genius, and incredulous turn of mind? But, if the testimony of the historian be not admitted, the witnesses, from whose testimony he related it, were of established character for veracity and judgment. This, indeed, is to the purpose. On this point the whole merits of the cause must rest. How, then, is this proved to us? Why, the author says *it may well be supposed*, and the historian tells us that they persisted in the report, when they could gain nothing by the fraud. But how does it appear that they had never received any reward for their verdict? The emperor, tho' he affected not the airs of divinity, yet was well pleased with his new title, and, no doubt, was well understood to look with a favourable eye on those who contributed to support it. The good uses to which this miracle served are honestly told us both by *Suetonius* and *Tacitus*: *Auctoritas, et quasi majestas quædam, ut scilicet inopinato et adhuc novo principi deerat, hæc quoque accessit, Suet. Miracula evenere, quæ celestis*

celestis favor et quædam in Vespasianum inclinatio numinum ostenderetur, Tacit. The *Alexandrians* could not but have an interest in gaining the favour of this prince: the persons cured are said to be *è plebe Alexandrinâ*, probably unknown to these witnesses and to all the *Romans* about *Vespasian*: the partisans of the new emperor were prepared to welcome and improve every thing that looked in his favour: the physicians, who were consulted whether these disorders were curable, declared that they were: where, then, is the wonder that two men should be instructed to act the part of lame and blind, when they were sure of succeeding in the fraud, and of being well rewarded (*as we may well suppose*) for their pains.

This story is followed by two others, as remarkable proofs of the credulity of mankind, which, having obtained in *Christian* countries, may perhaps be thought more apposite to the author's purpose of discrediting the *Christian miracles*. "There is
 "also," saith he, "a very memorable story
 "related by cardinal *de Retz*, and which
 "may well deserve our consideration: when
 "that intriguing politician fled into *Spain*,
 "to avoid the persecution of his enemies,
 "he

“ he passed thro’ *Saragoſſa*, the capital of
 “ *Arragon*, where he was ſhewn, in the ca-
 “ thedral church, a man who had ſerved
 “ twenty years as a door-keeper of the
 “ church, and was well known to every body
 “ in town who had ever paid their devotions
 “ at that cathedral : he had been ſeen for ſo
 “ long a time wanting a leg, but recovered
 “ that limb by the rubbing of holy oyl upon
 “ the ſtump ; and, when the cardinal exa-
 “ mined it, he found it to be a true natural
 “ leg, like the other. This miracle was
 “ vouched by all the canons of the church ;
 “ and the whole company of the town was
 “ appealed to for a confirmation of the fact,
 “ whom the cardinal found, by their zea-
 “ lous devotion, to be thorough believers
 “ of the miracle. Here the relater was alſo
 “ cotemporary with the ſuppoſed prodigy,
 “ of an incredulous and libertine character,
 “ as well as of great genius — the miracle
 “ of ſo ſingular a nature as could ſcarce
 “ admit of a counterfeit — and the wit-
 “ neſſes very numerous, and all of them,
 “ in a manner, ſpectators of the fact of
 “ which they gave their testimony : and
 “ what adds mightily to the force of the
 “ evidence, and may double our ſurpriſe on
 “ this occaſion, is, that the cardinal him-
 “ ſelf,

“ self, who relates the story, seems not to
 “ give any credit to it, and, consequently,
 “ cannot be suspected of any concurrence
 “ in the holy fraud *.” The story is, indeed, remarkable, as the author has told it. First, the relator was *a cardinal, and a man of great genius* ; and, tho’ he had never seen the wooden leg, yet he satisfied himself that the man had now *two natural legs, like another man*. It does not, indeed, appear, that he examined all or any of the canons, or that he discoursed with any body in town about it : but he found, *by the devotion of the people*, that they believed the man to have had a wooden leg. Then the cardinal was a man of a libertine character, *and, which is still more wonderful, and adds mightily to the evidence, he did not believe the story himself*. This climax of evidence and wonder still rising upon us is very extraordinary. The relator of the story was a *cardinal*, and therefore a good evidence of a *Romish* miracle : he was of a *libertine character*, and therefore had the better right to be believed ; but, what puts the evidence out of question, *he did not believe the story himself* ; which, again, is *doubly surprizing*, as the author observes, because he was naturally of an *incredulous*

credulous temper. This is the first story. The second deserves a more serious attention.

“ There, surely, never was so great a
 “ number of miracles ascribed to one per-
 “ son, as those which were lately said to
 “ have been wrought in *France* upon the
 “ tomb of *Abbé Pâris*, the famous *Jansenist*,
 “ with whose sanctity the people were
 “ so long deluded. The curing of the sick,
 “ giving hearing to the deaf and sight to
 “ the blind, were every-where talked of as
 “ the usual effects of that holy sepulchre.
 “ But, what is more extraordinary, many
 “ of the miracles were immediately proved,
 “ upon the spot, before judges of unques-
 “ tioned integrity, attested by witnesses of
 “ credit and distinction, in a learned age,
 “ and on the most eminent theatre that is
 “ now in the world. Nor is this all: a
 “ relation of them was published and dis-
 “ persed every-where: nor were the *Jesuits*,
 “ tho’ a learned body, supported by the ci-
 “ vil magistrate, and determined enemies to
 “ those opinions in whose favour the mira-
 “ cles were said to have been wrought, ever
 “ able distinctly to refute or detect them.
 “ Where shall we find such a number of

“ circumstances agreeing to the corrobora-
 “ tion of one fact ? And what have we to
 “ oppose to such a cloud of witnesses, but
 “ the absolute impossibility or miraculous
 “ nature of the events which they relate ?
 “ And this, surely, in the eyes of all rea-
 “ sonable people, will alone be regarded as
 “ a sufficient refutation *.”

The author has here asserted many things
 that he will not be able to support. The
 miracles pretended were, many of them, re-
 futed upon the spot : a judicial inquest was
 made by the archbishop of *Paris* into one
 of the most celebrated, and the cheat was
 fully detected : the lieutenant of the police
 brought many to confess that the part they
 had acted was all artifice and pretence ; and
 an ordonnance was hereupon issued from the
 court for apprehending all that were con-
 cerned in such frauds : the archbishop of
Sens exhibited a public charge against more
 than twenty, as palpable and discovered
 cheats : and Mr. *Montgeron*, the professed
 advocate of these miracles, of whom we
 shall have more to say hereafter, does not,
 in his answer, pretend to defend a fourth
 part

part of these : and the author may see his defence of these, and of all the other miracles he defends, *distinctly refuted* in the *Critique générale* of Mr. *Des Vœux*. The most usual effects of this sepulchre were not cures, but distempers—a sort of convulsions, which seized alike the sound and the sick, and were attended with such strange appearances as brought great contempt and ridicule upon the other miracles of this saint. These convulsions, we are told by skilful physicians, are easily counterfeited, and, from being counterfeited, frequently become real and habitual : they are too so communicable, by a sort of sympathy, to persons of weak nerves, that this distemper, it is well known, is for this reason excluded some of our great hospitals ; it having been found that, when one is seized, it spreads, like infection, thro’ a whole ward. This will account for the great numbers who are said to have felt this extraordinary effect from visiting the *Abbé’s* tomb.

I deny not that there were real cures wrought upon the sick that were brought there : but the same, I dare pronounce, would happen, if a thousand people, taken

at a venture, were at any time removed from their sick chambers in *London* to *St. Paul's Church-yard* or the *Park*, especially, if they went with any strong hope of a cure : in such a number, some are always upon the point of recovery — many only want to fancy themselves well — others may be flattered for a time into this belief, while they are ill — and many more, by fresh air and motion, and especially by forbearing the use of other means, will find a change for the better : but, that the blind received their sight, or the deaf were restored to hearing, by these visits, I deny that we have any competent or tolerable evidence. This sanguine writer does, indeed, take upon him to answer for *the credit of the witnesses* and the *integrity of the judges*. But these miracles were never proved in a judicial way. The vouchers produced for them are only certificates collected from all sorts of persons, who were neither interrogated by judge or council, nor confronted by other witnesses : they only left their depositions or affidavits in the hands of a notary, who was not concerned to examine, or even to know, the persons who made them, or whether they gave in their own or
ficti-

fictitious names. The credit, therefore, of the witnesses was never proved by any trial whatsoever *.

G 3

Doctor

* In the second edition of the *Metaphysical Essays* there is an additional note to p. 195, &c. in which the author observes, that “ the *Molinist* party had tried to discredit these “ miracles in one instance, that of Mademoiselle *Le Franc*. “ But, besides that their proceedings were the most irregular in the world, particularly in citing only a few of the “ *Jansenists*’ witnesses, whom they tampered with : besides “ this, I say, they soon found themselves overwhelmed by “ a cloud of new witnesses, one hundred and twenty in “ number, most of them persons of credit and substance in “ *Paris*, who gave oath (— *for what ? not for the miracle* “ *in question, but*) for the miracles.”

The pretended cure of *Anne le Franc* was the most celebrated and best-attested of all the first miracles of this saint ; and was, therefore, very fitly pitched upon for examination, in order to give all the advantage to the miracles that could be wished, and to put the trial of them upon the fairest issue. It was tried by a judicial process directed for that purpose ; and, whatever formalities the author may think wanting in the proceedings, it was so clearly convicted of imposture, that one of the ablest advocates for these miracles, M. *le Gros*, could find nothing to reply in it’s defence ; nor does M. *de Montgeron* himself pretend to defend it. It was proved, by five of the witnesses to this miracle, that the certificates, which they had given into the hands of the notary, and which were countersigned by Mademoiselle *le Franc* herself, were afterwards falsified, and many material circumstances added which they had never attested : by others,

Doctor *Middleton*, who has likewise set out the evidence of these miracles with great parade, is pleased to tell us that “ the reality

thers, that she was, in great measure, recovered before she visited the tomb ; and that many of the disorders alleged as cured were entirely chimerical : and by others, that she returned from the tomb in the same condition that she went there, and still wanted the help of farther medicines : which last circumstance may seem confirmed by the non-appearance of *le Franc* herself, who was not to be found at the trial.

The author goes on, after celebrating the vigilance, activity, penetration, and extensive intelligence of *Monf. Hérault*, then *lieutenant de police*, to observe, that “ this magistrate, who by the nature of his office is almost absolute, “ was invested with full powers, on purpose to suppress or “ discredit these miracles ; and he frequently seized immediately and examined the witnesses and subjects of them ; “ but never could reach any thing satisfactory against them.” But the nature of this magistrate’s office was so far from making him absolute in the present case, that it gave him no power at all to examine the truth of these miracles. This was the province of the archbishop alone, and not to be invaded : accordingly, in the ordonnance of the king, dated *January 27, 1732*, by which *Mr. Hérault* was impowered to arrest and confine the most obstinate of these miraculized cheats, after the conviction of *Anne le Franc*, and after he had brought many to a voluntary confession of the fraud, this power is particularly reserved to the archbishop.

Soon

“ lity of them is attested by some of the
 “ principal physicians and surgeons in
 “ *France*, as well as the clergy of the first
 “ dignity, several of whom were eye-wit-
 “ nesses of them, who presented a verbal
 “ process of each to the archbishop with a
 “ petition, signed by above twenty curés or
 “ rectors of the parishes of *Paris*, desiring
 “ that they might be authentically register-
 “ ed, and solemnly published to the people,
 “ as true miracles *.” Any one, who reads
 this in connection with what goes before it,
 will be led to believe that a great number
 of these miracles had been confirmed by

G 4

this

Soon after this the tomb was inclosed and shut up; but
 the same farce still continued in many parts of the city,
 some hundreds pretending to these miraculous convulsions;
 most of them poor girls, who got a livelihood by the busi-
 ness. So that the author might have spared his remark,
 “ No *Jansenist* was ever embarrassed to account for the ces-
 “ sation of the miracles when the church-yard was shut up.
 “ ’Twas the touch of the tomb that operated these extra-
 “ ordinary effects; and when no one could approach the
 “ tomb, no effects could be expected, &c.” As he might
 too his concern for the poor *Molinists* that rejected these
 miracles; who were never put, as he represents, to the
 hard necessity of accounting for them from witchcraft and
 the power of the devil, but always resolved them into their
 proper causes.

* *Free Inquiry*, p. 225.

this verbal process * : but there never were, as far as I can inform myself, more than four or five thus proved by order of the cardinal *Noailles*. Whether the petition mentioned was presented by physicians and clergy of the first dignity, as the doctor's words seem to import, I will not take upon me to controvert : but, in all that I have read, I find only that it was presented by the twenty-two curés who signed it †. The
doctor

* The verbal process I take to be a narrative of the fact drawn up on the spot by a magistrate (in the present case, by a commissary appointed for that purpose) upon a view of the place and circumstances, an examination of the parties, and the deposition of witnesses.

† Mr. *Hume*, in the additional note to page 196, speaking of Mr. *de Ventimille*, who was successor to cardinal *Noailles* in the archbishoprick of *Paris*, tells us, that twenty-two rectors or curés of that city, whose general character, for strictness of life and manners, he celebrates very justly, but very little to the purpose, did, “ with infinite earnestness, press him to examine these miracles, which they assert to be known to the whole world, and indisputably certain : but he wisely forbore.” But it is certain, that this prelate was so far from forbearing or declining this task, that he caused a publick judicial inquest to be made into them ; and, in an ordonnance of *November 8, 1725*, has published the most convincing proofs, that the miracles, so strongly warranted by these curés, were forged and counterfeited.

doctor might have told us too that it was rejected as well as presented, and the archbishop's reasons for rejecting it, which were nothing less than palpable falsehoods and contradictions, legally proved *par des informations juridiques*, on the witnesses, and even in the depositions taken by order of the cardinal *de Noailles*: he might have told us that thirty of the most eminent *Jansenist* doctors, who were supposed to have an interest in supporting these miracles, protested against the abuse that was made of them, and published many good reasons for not believing them—that, if some physicians of note pronounced the cures in question to be miraculous, many more, who had better opportunities of informing themselves, judged the contrary—that one of the faculty published a treatise to account for the phænomenon of the convulsions in a natural way, and several, who were consulted on the other pretended cures, declared the whole to be fiction and imposture*.

All

* See letter 7th of the *Critique* of Mr. *Des Vœux*. This judicious writer, who is now minister of the *French* church in *Dublin*, was himself a *Jansenist* and an inhabitant of *Paris* at the time when these miracles were celebrated. This circumstance, which adds to the credit of his verdict,
doctor

All that was real in these phænomena may be accounted for from nature: but a great part was certainly appearance, and owing to art. The *Abbé Pâris*, as doctor *Middleton* has told us, “ was a zealous *Jansenist*, and a warm opposer of the bull or “ constitution *Unigenitus*, by which the doctrines of this sect were expressly condemned: he died in 1725, and was buried in the churchyard of *St. Medard* in *Paris*, whither the great reputation of his sanctity drew many people to visit his tomb, and pay their devotions to him as a saint; and this concourse, gradually increasing, made him soon be considered as a subject proper to revive the credit of that party, now utterly depressed by the power of the *Jesuits*, supported by the “ authority

doctor *Middleton*, who had seen his book, and therefore must know it, chuses to conceal, and to represent him only as a *Protestant writer*. This may be excused. But it is too much to assert that “ he does not deny the facts, but only “ endeavours to make the miraculous nature of them suspected:” for near a fourth part of this book, which consists of nine letters, in two volumes, 12mo, is taken up in disproving these facts, and the title at the head of one of the longest letters is *Où l'on fait voir, par les pièces même que Mr. de Montgeron produit, que les faits qu'il publie ne sont pas vrais.*

“ authority of the court *.” Half the city of *Paris*, and many among them of rank, took part with the appellants against this bull. The saint was, therefore, sure to have justice done him. Most of these, if they did not believe, yet wished well to his miracles, for the sake of mortifying the *Jesuits* and their party.

“ But the evidence of these miracles is still
 “ preserved in a pompous volume of *Monf.*
 “ *de Montgeron*, a person of eminent rank
 “ in *Paris*, who, *Dr. Middleton* tells us,
 “ dedicated and presented it to the king in
 “ person, being induced, as the author de-
 “ clares, by the incontestable evidence of
 “ the facts, by which he himself from a
 “ libertine and professed Deist, became a
 “ sincere convert to the *Christian* faith †.”

As the credit of these boasted miracles rests almost wholly on this book of *Mr. Montgeron*, the reader will not be displeased, if we stop a little to consider the character of the work and it's author.

This book was published, as we are advertised at the beginning, to demonstrate,
 among

* *Free Inquiry*, p. 223.

† *Free Inquiry*, p. 224.

among other things, the justice of the cause of the appellants against the bull *Unigenitus*: but it was so far from answering the purpose of reviving the credit of the *Jansenists* or their miracles, that from this time they sunk into greater disgrace than ever; while the author was cashiered from his employment, sent first to the *Bastile*, and afterwards into banishment. The author declares himself converted to Christianity by the evidence of these facts: but it is strange to observe, from his own history of this conversion, that it was wrought without his either seeing or examining the evidence of any one of these miracles. It appears, from this history, that the author was early impressed with a sense of religion—that, having given himself up to a life of pleasure and debauch, he was, on a certain occasion, so struck with remorse, as to shut himself up in a convent, with design to spend his days in penitence and retirement—that, returning again to his former life, he endeavoured to free himself from the checks of conscience by reading the books of Deists, and persuading himself that religion was a cheat—that the famous bull *Unigenitus*, which just then appeared, helped much to confirm him in this belief: But the fears of religion still kept hold of him,

him, and, particularly, on the first report of our *Abbé's* miracles, his conscience took the alarm, and put him upon inquiring in earnest into the truth of religion—that, upon hearing a second time of these miracles, he resolved to visit the tomb, and make a strict enquiry into their truth—that, coming there, he was immediately struck with the ardor that appeared in the devotion of the people; strongly impressed with which, he fell himself on his knees, and addressed a short prayer to the saint, beseeching him, “ That, if indeed he still lived, and had any power with the Almighty, he would pity his blindness, and intercede for him, that his mind might be enlightened, and the cloud removed which held him in darkness!” Upon which, immediately, while he continued some hours on his knees, all the arguments for religion, which he had ever heard or read, presented themselves to his mind, and passed in review before him, with such force and conviction, that he became from that moment a zealous and confirmed Christian. Here, you see, the author, without waiting for any miracle, or inquiring into those which he had heard, was not only converted to Christianity, but became a determined believer of all the miracles

racles of this faint. And from this short sketch we may easily make out his character, which was plainly that of a wrong-headed and violent man, that could think coolly about nothing, changing, as fancy or temper led him, from one opinion, from one extreme, to another, and governed throughout by passion or prejudice, and not by reason.

His book was published ten (or according to Dr. *Middleton*, twelve) years after the *Abbe's* death; and 'tis a collection of only nine cures, selected out of the great number which are said to have been wrought in all this time; the first of which I shall present my reader with, in a few words, as a specimen of the rest: A *Spanish* youth, at the age of ten years, lost entirely the sight of the left eye by a violent rheum and inflammation: a few years after, receiving a blow upon the right eye, he became almost blind for some days, but, by proper remedies, recovered his sight again: at the age of sixteen, this eye was attacked with a fluxion and inflammation like to that which had destroyed the other, but was soon recovered, by the application of a certain water, so far as to allow him for two or three months after to
 prosecute

prosecute his studies: but, the disorder then returning, and the same remedy being found ineffectual, he continued in this state, without the application of any remedy, near two months; at the end of which, hearing of the *Abbé Paris's* miracles, he resolved, with the consent of his governors, who were zealous *Jansenists*, to apply to the *Abbé's* tomb: he entered upon a neuvaine, or nine-days devotion, in honour of the saint, and to supplicate his assistance: the effect was, that his pains redoubled, and the inflammation increased; but towards the end of the term these bad symptoms abated, and his eye at last became strong enough to bear the light, and to permit him to return to his studies: and all this without the use of any other means than saving the eye from reading for three months, shutting out the light, and bathing it the two last days with a little decoction of mallow-roots with laudanum, prescribed by an oculist; and this too owed all it's virtue to the manner of applying it, which was not with a common linen rag, but a piece of the shirt in which the *Abbé* died, and some of the earth in which he was buried. A certain *Jansenist* physician, who saw this eye two days before the cure, judging it to be a disorder of the optick nerve,

expressed

expressed some doubt whether it were curable, and, being told afterwards that no human means had been used, inclined to think the cure miraculous. This, I suppose, is one of the principal physicians, who, Dr. Middleton tells us, attested the truth of these miracles. But it is certain that many other physicians and oculists, both in *France* and *Spain*, thought otherwise, and prescribed bleeding, bathing, and the use of different medicines for it. The left eye, in the mean time, remained in it's former state, uncured; and the eye which was healed relapsed some time after, and was again cured by bleeding. This is the first miracle, as it is related by this author, and attested by many vouchers and certificates printed along with it—a story too contemptible for argument or remark. But, if the reader desires to see the false colouring in which the writer has dressed it, and the inconsistencies and prevarication of the witnesses detected, he may find this done, to his entire satisfaction, in the letters above-mentioned, and in the nineteenth and twentieth tomes of the *Bibliothèque raisonnée*; from which, and Mr. Vernet's *Traité de la Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne*, most of these remarks are taken.

The

The evidence then, for these miracles, tho' set out with so much eloquent pomp, when examined, is found to amount to very little. But this is acknowledged, that the credulity of mankind is very fully proved by this and the other legendary miracles of Popery, and that hence an argument of seeming weight still lies against the miracles of the Gospel: for, if so many other miracles have been believed rashly and without reason, it is possible that these may likewise have been received upon incompetent testimony: and, if this be possible, must it not also be allowed more probable, than that events so strange and contrary to the common course of nature should be true? This is the inference, we may presume, the author would have us make from the stories he hath related; and this objection he has incidentally dropped in several parts of his Essay: "The
 " many instances of forged miracles,
 " and prophecies, and supernatural events,
 " which, in all ages, have either been de-
 " tected by contrary evidence, or which de-
 " tect themselves by their absurdity, mark
 " sufficiently the strong propensity of man-
 " kind to the extraordinary and the mar-

H

" vel-

“vellous, and ought reasonably to beget
 “a suspicion against all relations of this
 “kind * :” And again, in the place above
 cited, “Should a miracle be ascribed to
 “any new system of religion, men in all
 “ages have been so much imposed on
 “by ridiculous stories of that kind, that
 “this very circumstance would be suffici-
 “ent, with all men of sense, not only to
 “make them reject the fact, but even re-
 “ject it without farther examination †.”
 As this is one of the most specious and
 prevailing arguments against the miracles
 of religion, it will deserve a distinct an-
 swer.

To the first consequence, then, which the
 author here draws from the credulity of men,
 I readily agree — That miracles and facts
 of an extraordinary nature may be justly
 suspected, 'till sufficient evidence of their
 reality is produced, and ought never to be
 received, 'till after a previous examination
 had into this evidence. But, that all mi-
 racles should be rejected without examina-
 tion, because a great number have been
 forged, is, sure, a most illogical conclusion.
 The

* P. 186.

† P. 200.

The truth of the Gospel miracles does not imply that all the miracles upon record are true: how then does the falsehood of other miracles affect the truth of these? If some men are cheats and impostors, is there no truth in the world? If some have believed upon too slight evidence, must we, therefore, reject all testimony, and disbelieve or doubt about every thing? Is the currency of bad coin a proof that there is none good? The test and assay will always distinguish the true from the false: and it is our own fault, if we are imposed upon by counterfeits. God hath given us reason and understanding to know good and evil, truth and falsehood, and in all things pertaining to life or duty, hath made the difference between them sufficiently clear and discernible. If he speaks to us by miracles, he will, doubtless, cause his voice to be known, and give full evidence of his authority. To those, who are not present witnesses of his power, this evidence will be transmitted with such testimony as cannot be impeached — such as will stand every fair and equitable trial. With such testimony, we assert, the Scripture miracles are delivered down to us. Let them be brought to the trial, and, if they are found want-

ing, be rejected ; but not be condemned, as this supercilious writer would have them, unheard.

I observe, that this author, in common with many others, seems to think every proof of the credulity of mankind a sort of argument against the evidence of the Gospel : they think this sufficient to account for the belief of all miracles, and that it is, therefore, needless and folly to look for any evidence in their favour : “ When such
 “ reports fly about, the solution of the
 “ phænomenon is obvious ; and we judge
 “ in conformity to experience and observa-
 “ tion, when we account for it by the
 “ known principles of credulity and delu-
 “ sion. And shall we, rather than have
 “ recourse to so natural a solution, allow
 “ of a miraculous violation of the most
 “ known and most established laws of na-
 “ ture * ?” But I must deny that there is any such cause or principle in human nature as credulity. If some are more credulous than others — if the same person be more credulous in some points than others — this depends upon other principles : it
 is

* P. 197.

is a natural effect, and always to be accounted for from natural causes. Interest, when it is opposed by truth, will bias the mind to error: ignorance and indolence will dispose men, the one of necessity, the other of choice, to follow the judgment of others, and to believe as the world about them does: a deference to authority, whether publick or private — a prejudice to opinions in which we have been educated, or which we have long entertained — has the like effect: where men are, as is frequent, divided into parties by opinion, this prejudice will be heightened by pride and resentment; they will hearken greedily to every thing that favours their system, and be obstinately deaf to every thing that opposes it. These are principles in human nature of great force and extent; and, where they induce to the belief of any thing, there we may suspect credulity, and that men will be prepared to believe, without evidence, even things the most difficult of belief. If, in these circumstances, it happens, that not the fact itself, but the miraculous nature of it only, is the point that gratifies our wishes, there, the greater the miracle is, the greater are these corrupt reasons for believing it, and, the more strange and

incredible it is, the more easily sometimes will it obtain belief : as a stone, the heavier it is, and the more unapt to motion, will descend the swifter, if the plane be sufficiently inclined, upon which it moves.

But, on the other hand, where these or such-like principles have no influence, truth will be fairly heard, and the faith of men will be generally proportioned to the evidence that appears : and, where men believe and maintain opinions contrary to the influence of these principles, it is a fair presumption that their faith is well grounded, and that their assent is extorted by the force of truth. The principles, therefore, of credulity will by no means account for all belief alike. Tho' a stone will descend by it's own weight, it does not follow that it can move itself upon even ground ; and, if it be seen, contrary to it's natural gravity, to ascend a steep acclivity, we are sure that there must be some competent power to impell it. Where miracles are wished for or wanted, the strangest and most unsupported may be believed : but, in other circumstances, the miraculous nature of the fact will hang as a weight upon it, and retard it's progress ; and, if it make it's way,

in

in opposition to the wishes, passions, and prejudices of mankind, there must be truth and evidence to support it.

I have already asserted that it required a stronger faith and more credulity to believe the evidence of the Gospel false, than to believe the miracles true. All the principles that can make men credulous conspired to make the first Christians disbelieve the Gospel. It was not, therefore, credulity, but conviction, which wrought this belief in them. But these principles very naturally account for the miracles of the *Romish* church. Interest, authority, and all the powers of enthusiasm, superstition, and prejudice, forward the belief of these: the power of the church is supported by them, and the countenance of the church, in the opinion of the believer, gives certainty and infallibility to them.

The disparity, then, betwixt these and the Gospel miracles is infinite. The end for which the Scripture miracles were wrought is the greatest that can be thought of, and the testimony by which they are supported is confirmed by the surest test of truth. If miracles, therefore, are in any case credi-

ble, they are in this ; if testimony is in any case to be relied on, it is in this. But what are the ends proposed or answered by the miracles of Popery ? More offerings are, perhaps, brought to the shrine at *Loretto*, more gain is made of the relicks of the saints. But are any nations brought to the faith, or is any single infidel converted, by them ? Then, the testimony which vouches them is implicitly received, and the veracity of the witnesses confirmed by no proof or trial. There is no one condition here to make miracles credible — no one circumstance to credit the evidence that supports them. There is, therefore, no consequence to be drawn from these to the miracles of the Gospel.

And the same observation will hold, tho' not with equal force, of the miracles recorded in the church before the times of Popery : there were not the same antecedent reasons for working them, nor the same great consequences attending them : and when were any called, at the hazard of their fortunes and lives, to attest them ? We are not, therefore, to be alarmed, if the truth of these miracles is sometimes brought in question, or even if many of them should be

be proved to be false ; since the miracles of *Christ* and his Apostles are no way affected by this, and the Gospel wants no miracles, but it's own, to support it : nor, indeed, can we do a greater injury to the cause of Christianity, than to parallel these, even supposing them true, with the canonical miracles of Scripture ; since, tho' both may be equally true, yet the evidence upon which we receive them, and, consequently, the reasons for believing them, are not equal, but the one, in it's weight and force, infinitely transcends the other. Nor is it any reproach to Christianity, or any just cause of offence to pious Christians, if the fathers of the church, men justly celebrated for their piety and virtue, and even for their learning and abilities, are found to have given too easy credit to these miracles. Learning and piety are no security against errors of this kind. On the contrary, men of this character, as they are often less practised in the arts of men, and less apt to suspect design and fraud in others, may lie more open to be deceived. Men may be prejudiced, even by piety and virtue, to such opinions as are thought favourable to piety and virtue, and, where any thing is thought of good tendency, may think it good to believe

lieve it. A little acquaintance with history will teach us, if our own observation does not, that men of great abilities and of the most upright intentions may be hasty in believing and zealous in supporting the belief of fables, especially where the cause of virtue or religion is supposed to be promoted by them.

We may, therefore, retain our veneration for the piety and good works of these eminent lights of the church, without believing every thing that they believed : we may believe many of the facts which they have recorded to be false, without hurting Christianity, or in the least impairing the evidence of the Gospel.

I might, under this head, have observed that false miracles are almost a natural consequence of true, and, therefore their prevalence and reception is rather a presumption of the existence of true miracles than an argument against them. Could we foresee that a series of miracles would be wrought in any country, and a publick worship and religion be established in consequence of it, we might presume that miracles would be there more frequently pretended and counterfeited

terfeited than in any other place. True miracles, like true money, will give a currency to false ; and the authority and character, which they give to those that work them, will excite the crafty and ambitious to imitate them. On the other hand, where no prior miracles are acknowledged, there is less temptation to counterfeit this power, and more difficulty of succeeding in it. In fact, the false pretences of miracles among Christians are no more than might be expected, in consequence of the truth and certainty of the first miracles of Christianity ; and, if the number of these has been far greater in the *Christian* world than elsewhere, it is an argument that there, if anywhere, true miracles have been wrought. The reader will be pleased to see this argument in the words of Dr. *Middleton* :

“ The innumerable forgeries of this sort,
 “ which have been imposed upon mankind
 “ in all ages, are so far from weakening
 “ the credibility of the *Jewish* and *Christian*
 “ miracles, that they strengthen it : for how
 “ could we account for a practice so uni-
 “ versal, of forging miracles for the support
 “ of false religions, if on some occasions
 “ they had not actually been wrought for
 “ the confirmation of a true one ? or, how
 “ is

“ is it possible that so many spurious copies
 “ should pass upon the world, without some
 “ genuine original from which they were
 “ drawn, whose known existence and tried
 “ success might give an appearance of pro-
 “ bability to the counterfeit? Now, of all
 “ the miracles of antiquity, there are none
 “ that can pretend to the character of ori-
 “ ginals, but those of the Old and New
 “ Testament, which, though the oldest by
 “ far of all others of which any monuments
 “ now remain in the world, have yet main-
 “ tained their credit to this day, through
 “ the perpetual opposition and scrutiny of
 “ ages; whilst all the rival productions of
 “ fraud and craft have long ago been suc-
 “ cessively exploded, and sunk into utter
 “ contempt — an event that cannot reason-
 “ ably be ascribed to any other cause, but
 “ to the natural force and effect of truth,
 “ which, tho’ defaced for a time by the
 “ wit, or depressed by the power, of man,
 “ is sure still to triumph in the end over all
 “ the false mimicry of art and the vain
 “ efforts of human policy *.”

The remainder of this Essay is little more
 than a rude insult on the Scriptures and
 the

* Prefatory Discourse to a Letter from *Rome*, p. 88.

the *Christian* religion. For fear his readers should mistake his meaning, and not apply his argument where he intended, the author proceeds, with a smiling grimace, to tell us, “that our most holy religion is
 “founded on faith, not on reason; and
 “’tis a sure method of exposing it, to put
 “it to such a trial as it is by no means
 “fitted to endure.” This he pretends to make evident by examining the miracles related in the Pentateuch: “Here,” says he,
 “we are to consider a book presented to us
 “by a barbarous and ignorant people,
 “wrote in an age when they were still more
 “barbarous, and, in all probability, long
 “after the facts it relates, corroborated by
 “no concurring testimony, and resembling
 “those fabulous accounts which every nation gives of its origin. Upon reading
 “this book we find it full of prodigies and
 “miracles: it gives an account of a state
 “of the world and of human nature entirely different from the present — of our
 “fall from that state — of the age of man
 “extended to near a thousand years — of
 “the destruction of the world by a deluge — of the arbitrary choice of one
 “people as the favourites of heaven, and
 “that people the countrymen of the author

“thor — of their deliverance from bondage
 “by prodigies the most astonishing imagi-
 “nable: I desire any one to lay his hand
 “upon his heart, and, after serious confi-
 “deration, declare, whether he thinks that
 “the falsehood of such a book, supported
 “by such a testimony, would be more ex-
 “traordinary and miraculous than all the
 “miracles it relates; which is, however,
 “necessary to make it be received, accord-
 “ing to the measures of probability above
 “established *.”

If the *Jews* were thus more than barbarous
 at the time when these books were wrote,
 whence, without a miracle, could they learn
 all the great truths relating to the being
 and attributes of God, which the most
 learned part of the world were for many
 ages after in total ignorance about?
 Whence could the religion and laws of
 this people so far exceed those of the wisest
 Heathen, and come out at once, in their
 first infancy, thus perfect and entire; when
 all human systems are found to grow up by
 degrees, and to ripen, after many improve-
 ments, into perfection? The *Jews* had
 but

but little commerce with other nations, and, therefore, did not excel in the literary and other arts of *Greece*: but the same Scriptures, which prove that they were earlier in possession of the most useful and sublime parts of knowledge, secured them likewise from ever sinking into that barbarity which the author charges upon them. Let any one compare the book of *Genesis*, which he treats with so much freedom, and which is by many centuries the oldest book in the world, with any of the earliest heathen historians — let him compare the psalms of *David* with the hymns of *Callimachus* or *Orpheus* — let him read the history of *Josephus*, who was just cotemporary with *Christ* and his Apostles — and he will incline to judge more favourably of this people.

The great events recorded in this history have no connection with the argument of miracles, and, therefore, do not belong to this place. But these are corroborated by the strongest concurring testimony that can be desired to facts that are, most of them, older than the use of letters itself. The traditions of every country seem all to point to one and the same original. The late invention

vention of arts and sciences, the foundation of cities and empires, the manner of peopling the world, and the number of it's present inhabitants, seem all to prove that the world had it's beginning no earlier than the period assigned by *Moses*, and agree perfectly with the account of the deluge. There are no monuments of antiquity which give room to suspect the world of earlier original. The first authors of *Greece* and *Egypt* speak of the chaos, of the abyss of waters that covered the earth, of man's being formed out of the ground, and of his first innocence. From these, one of the *Latin* poets has described the creation, the state of innocence, the gradual corruption of mankind, and the deluge, in a manner very nearly resembling that of *Moses*. The memory of a general flood, which destroyed the whole race of men and animals, except one family, seems to have been preserved for some ages among almost all nations. *Lucian* tells us, the tradition among both the *Greeks* and *Syrians* was, that this was a judgment from heaven on the wickedness of mankind : he describes the manner of the flood, the ark in which some of every kind were preserved, and many other particulars, just as we have them in the book of *Genesis*.

Plutarch,

Plutarch, alluding to the same tradition, mentions the ark, and even the dove that was sent forth to see if the waters were abated. A great number of antient authors, who mention the deluge, and give witness to the building of *Babel*, the burning of *Sodom*, and many other great events in the *Mosaic* history, are reckoned up by *Josephus*, *Grotius*, and others. The present surface of the earth, the shells of fish that are found in midland countries, and even on the tops of mountains, and the remains of land-animals at very great depths in the earth, are still surviving monuments of the deluge*. It is almost certain that the

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world

* An universal deluge will, I suppose, be allowed one of the most miraculous facts in the history of the Old Testament. The difficulties that on all sides surround it are as great as can easily be conceived. And hence many *Christian* writers (among whom is the learned Mr. *Wollaſton*) have thought it sufficient to believe that this flood was topical, confined to a small part of *Asia*; and that the genius of the language in which the relation is delivered, and the manner of writing history in it, will account for all the rest. But, the more we improve in natural knowledge, the more reasons we see for believing this history in the literal and largest sense. One of the latest and ablest writers upon this subject confirms what the best natural historians have observed — that the shells of fish are found in great quantities in all parts of the world — that the *Lapides Judaici*, which are gathered on the top of mount *Carmel*, are evidently the re-
mains

world began to be peopled about the plains of *Babylon* and near where the ark is said to have rested. From the east colonies of men were sent westward : and from thence we can trace pretty distinctly the progress of arts and sciences. The long lives of the first men are spoken of by all the Heathens.

This

mains of a sea-animal — that the *Alps* and *Pyrenean* mountains abound with others — and that there is not a mountain in the world, in which there have been tolerable opportunities of enquiring, where remains of sea-animals have not been found : he tells us, that many of those which are found in great abundance in our island are natives of other seas — that the horns of *Indian* deer are found in great clusters, and always at considerable depths, in many parts of *England*, and sometimes under a stratum of sea-shells : and hence, though writing upon another question, he concludes, “ it is equally certain, that, wherever they are found, water must have at one time overflowed, since there is no other possible means of their being brought there ; and, since they are found in every part of the earth, the tops of the highest mountains not excepted, that overflowing of water must have been universal.” *Hill's Remarks on Phil. Transf.* p. 53. Here, then, we have one of the most disputable parts of the Bible-history confirmed and proved by indisputable fact and experiment. In the mean time, it must be observed that the miracles upon which the *Christian* and *Jewish* religions were built have an evidence of their own, distinct from that of the other parts of this history ; and that, tho' it were allowed that many errors may have crept into the historical parts of this book, yet the truth of these religions, and the faith of those miracles upon which they are built, would remain unshaken.

This fact is so far from discrediting the *Mosaic* history, that Monsieur *Pascal* reckons it a full proof of the fidelity of the author : “ This historian,” says he, “ has brought “ the deluge, and even the creation, so “ near his own time, by means of the few “ generations which he counts between “ them, that the memory of them could “ not but be still fresh and lively in the “ minds of all the *Jewish* nation.” In the line of tradition there are but five steps betwixt *Moses* and the first man. “ There- “ fore, the creation and the deluge are in- “ dubitably true. This argument,” says he, “ must be acknowledged for conclusive by “ those who apprehend it’s process *.” The longevity of men in the first ages seems necessary for the better peopling the world, the invention and improvement of arts, and for propagating religious and all useful knowledge, when they depended wholly on tradition. And I am persuaded that this author cannot even invent a more probable or rational account of peopling the world than this which he affects to deride.

The other insinuations, which he has thrown out to discredit these books, have been so often refuted, that it is tedious to

* *Pascal's Thoughts*, p. 86.

go over them again. The authority of an historian is not, sure, the worse for his being the countryman of those whose history he writes. The character of *Moses* is remarkably free from all partiality to himself and his countrymen: he faithfully records all the obstinacy and perverse behaviour of the latter, and frequently reproaches them with it in the severest terms: he spares not his own failings, or those of his nearest friends, and omits many things, which are recorded by others, to his honour: the future government of the *Israelites* he left not to his own tribe, but to that of *Judah*, and, in the appointment of his immediate successor, had no regard to his own family, but left them undistinguished and mixed with the common *Levites*.

As to the arbitrary preference of this people, a distinction in religious privileges is perfectly agreeable to the analogy of God's dispensations to mankind, both natural and moral. But the *Jewish* dispensation ought not to be considered apart, but in connection with the *Christian*, in which it ended. These are but different parts of one and the same scheme, which naturally illustrate and confirm each other's authority. "And, "from this view of them," says Dr. *Middleton*,

dleton, “ we see the weakness of that objection commonly made to the *Mosaic* part, “ on the account of it’s being calculated for “ the use only of a peculiar people ; where- “ as, in truth, it was the beginning of an “ universal system, which, from the time “ of *Moses*, was gradually manifested to the “ world by the successive missions of the “ Prophets, ’till that fulness of time, or “ coming of the *Messiah*, when life and immortality were brought to light by the “ Gospel, or the chief good and happiness “ of man perfectly revealed to him *.”

The origin of this people is so far from resembling the fabulous accounts of other nations, that it is quite singular, and in all respects different from any other. They are a numerous people, sprung from the loins of one man, and have continued unmixed with the rest of the world, if we reckon from the time of *Abraham*, when they were first marked out by the promise of God to his posterity, near 4000 years — a great part of the age of the world, and approaching very near to the time when it was last peopled by the posterity of *Noah*. Their very existence at this time, taken with all it’s

* Prefatory Discourse to the Letter from *Rome*, p. 88.

circumstances, is a miracle, which gives credit to all the miracles of *Moses*.

The books, which record these miracles, were certainly written soon after the facts; since the religion, laws, and polity of the *Jews* were wholly built upon them. These books are the great charter by which they were incorporated into a nation. These miracles are the only sanction which gives authority to the laws they contain. The miracles were wrought in the face of all *Israel*, and many of them under observation for a long time together. The books, that record them, were of publick authority and daily resort. It was, therefore, impossible, if false, that they should obtain credit for a day. The very being of these laws is a proof of the miracles connected with them; since the latter, if false, must have discovered the falsehood of the former. By appealing to these facts, it was put in the power of every one to see through, or, rather, it was put out of their power not to see through, the imposture. The memory of these facts was not only preserved in these records, but they were written, if I may so speak, and recorded in the daily customs and religious ceremonies of the *Jews*. The *Passover* was instituted in memory of their coming out of *Egypt*
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— the feast of *Pentecost* in token of the law being given upon mount *Sinai* fifty days after — that of *Tabernacles* in remembrance of their encamping in the desert — and, in the form of dedicating or offering their first-fruits, a solemn commemoration was enjoined of the signs and wonders by which they were delivered out of *Egypt*. The belief, therefore, of the miracles must of necessity be as antient as their religion; and indeed, without these, their religion, government, and even their present existence, as a people, would be more miraculous than all the miracles recorded in the Pentateuch.

We are now come to the conclusion of this celebrated Essay: “ Upon the whole,” says he, “ we may conclude, that the *Christian* religion not only was at first attended “ with miracles, but even at this day cannot “ be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to “ convince us of it’s veracity: and whoever “ is moved by faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own “ person, which subverts all the principles “ of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience *.”

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* P. 203.

The author in one of his Essays, complains of a want of politeness and civility in those who defend religion against the attacks of the Free-thinkers, "whose moderation and good manners," he tells us, "are very conspicuous, when compared with the furious zeal and scurrility of their adversaries *." But who can, without some impatience, see a religion which he holds sacred, and which hath established itself purely by reason and argument, treated with this open scorn and abuse? Has this author lived in the time of Sir *Isaac Newton*, Mr. *Locke*, and Mr. *Addison*? Can he know that these men gloried in the name of Christians, that the first of them employed many of his best hours in studying and illustrating the Scriptures, and that the other two have wrote professedly in the defence of this religion, and yet think himself at liberty to treat all that believe it as men that are incapable of reasoning or thinking? The charge, which he has here brought against the advocates of Christianity, is so far from being true, that I dare rest the whole merits of the controversy upon this issue. Let any one read the authors he mentions, *Collins* and *Tindal*, with *Morgan*, *Gordon*, and the latter writers in this cause, and compare them

* *Essays moral and political*, p. 62.

them with their antagonists, *Chandler, Conybeare, Leland, Foster*, and judge on which side the temper and moderation lies. And yet, if men claim some authority to opinions which have the publick voice on their side, where is the wonder or the blame? It is nothing unnatural for men thus supported to assume a confidence, and to expect some deference and modesty from their adversaries. But, when men oppose established opinions with an air of authority, and decide against the publick—when they profess to doubt, and yet dictate, about every thing, and act at once the Sceptick and the Dogmatist—this is a character, which, however it may be accounted for, can never be excused *. And I here ask my reader, whether

* The author tells us, that, “in all controversies, those who oppose the established and popular opinions affect a most extraordinary gentleness and moderation, in order to soften, as much as possible, any prejudices that may lie against them *.” But the fact is notoriously otherwise. In establishments of every kind, the party which forms the opposition, if they have the liberty to speak out, is usually the most furious and loud in invective. The reason is, the most furious and vehement spirits are the most impatient of control, and the most forward to oppose. A man that is a tyrant in his own temper is sure to complain of tyranny in his superiors; and a proud man will always think you proud, if you differ from him, whatever authority and whatever modesty

* *Essays moral and political*, p. 62.

whether he has any-where met with either a more sceptical, disputatious turn of mind, or a more imperious, dogmatical style, than in the writings of this author? It is remarkable

modesty you may have on your side. Thus the celebrated author of the *Patriot King* pronounces the most candid of all writers to be a *presumptuous Dogmatist* for daring to differ from his opinion, even before it was known. This consummate writer, not content to shine in his own sphere, assumes the nod, and will give the law in metaphysics as well as politics. “I would not say,” says he, “that God governs
 “by a rule that we know or may know as well as he, and
 “upon our knowledge of which he appeals to men for the
 “justice of his proceedings towards them, which a famous
 “divine has impiously advanced in a pretended demonstration of his being and attributes: God forbid *!” I learn from hence, that the famous divine spoken of has the misfortune to have fallen under the displeasure of this author, and that he has a sovereign contempt for all that do so. But, what his offence is, I am still at a loss to conjecture. I think myself certain, that he has no-where said what the author charges him with, “that we know or may know the rule
 “by which God governs as well as he.” He has indeed, said, “that God himself, tho’ he has no superior, from
 “whose will to receive any law of his actions, yet disdains
 “not to observe the rule of equity and goodness as the law
 “of all his actions in the government of the world, and
 “condescends to appeal even to men for the righteousness
 “and equity of his judgments (as in *Ezek. xviii*); that
 “(not barely his infinite power, but) the rules of this
 “eternal law are the true foundation and the measure of his
 “dominion over his creatures *.” But what is this more than

* *Patriot King*, p. 94.

* Demonstration of the being and attributes, &c. 9th edit. p. 218.

markable with what ease and alacrity he hath asserted the fact before us. But this cavalier manner is familiar to him. He tells us, in another essay, “that the Quakers are
“ perhaps

than the author himself has said, in terms as free, in the very page that is stained with this censure? “That God is
“ not an arbitrary, but a limited monarch, limited by the
“ rule which infinite wisdom prescribes to infinite power—
“ that he does always that which is fittest to be done—and
“ that this fitness, of which no created power is a competent judge, results from the various natures and the more
“ various relations of things.” He adds, “So that, as
“ creator of all systems by which those natures and relations
“ are constituted, he prescribed to himself the rule which
“ he follows as governor of every system of being.” This, though no candid reader will complain of it, is more crude and perplexed than any thing I remember in the author here arraigned. God does always what is right and fit. But right and fit were not made what they are, when this or any other system of beings was made. The fitness of every action, the same circumstances supposed, was always and ever will be the same. This rule is eternal and immutable as truth itself, and it’s authority is as universal, extending to all beings and to all possible systems of beings; as the author we are speaking of has, with equal modesty and clearness, asserted and proved immediately before the passage here cited. If he has said, farther, that God appeals to men for the justice of his proceedings, he has given his authority for this—an authority which a *Christian* divine must think decisive. And what doth this amount to more than saying that God hath implanted in men a sense of what is just, merciful, and good, and that all his dispensations are agreeable to our ideas of justice, mercy, and goodness? Does
not

“ perhaps the only regular body of Deists
 “ in the universe:” And again, “ that the
 “ leading whigs have always been either
 “ Deists

not the astronomer try the works of God by the laws of mechanism and geometry, when he pronounces that they are done in number, weight, and measure? And must we not have some measure of justice, mercy, and goodness, when we attribute these to the deity? To say that we can see the wisdom of God in his works is not saying that we are as wise as God himself: nor does our seeing the fitness and equity of his proceedings in some instances imply that we are competent judges of or can see the reason of his proceedings in all. As the author has not pointed out the passages in the writer he excepts against, I can only guess this to be the place. But, if he has any-where dropped an expression that may seem less accurate or proper upon this subject, the author might have pardoned it, who confesses, in the same page, that he cannot express himself on this subject properly, and that, when our ideas are inadequate, our expression must needs be improper. To return: We have here a phenomenon, which, to those who have not studied human nature, will appear altogether singular: Lord B——e complaining of the impiety, pride, and presumption of Dr. Clarke. Established opinions and an established character provoke his resentment: rather than submit to another, he will contradict himself. And this, I take it, is the principle from which most of Mr. Hume's philosophy is derived; to whose extraordinary gentleness and modesty that of this writer (to speak in the curious phrase of the latter) * is but as the positive degree to the superlative.

*Est genus hominum, qui esse primos se omnium rerum volunt,
 Nec sunt.*

* Patriot King, p. 148.

“ Deists or professed Latitudinarians in their principles, that is,” says he, “ friends to toleration, and indifferent to any particular sect of Christians *.” Now, it is certain that the Quakers profess the belief of Christianity as universally as any sect whatsoever. And what right has the author to charge a whole body of men with such flagrant insincerity? / As to the Whigs, the principles of toleration are certainly Christian principles, and do by no means imply an indifference to any sect, much less a coldness to religion in general: and, if the best Christians are usually the best subjects and citizens (which I think an indisputable truth) I should hope their principles would be no impediment to their faith. I am sure, however, they have no reason to thank this author for his compliment.

They who believe religion must think that the cause of virtue and the happiness of mankind are bound up in it: and this will justify a degree of zeal and ardor in its defence. But what is there to call for or excuse this spirit in those who oppose it? If the author be a friend to virtue, which, from his elegance of mind and taste, I scarce can doubt— if he be a friend to natural religion, which a
person

* *Essays moral and political*, p. 111.

person of so much thought and reflection sure must be—what principles has he in reserve for the support of these, when Christianity is taken away? The best philosophy, as I have already said, availed but little in reforming the religions or morals of mankind: and, as to the philosophy of this author, it is, as far as I understand it, as ill calculated for this purpose as any I have met with *. But, indeed, religion can never be supported, or virtue taught, with any force or effect, by the reasonings of philosophers. The world will never be governed by metaphysical ideas of honour and beauty, decency of action, and the fitness of things. It is the author's own observation, that “an
 “ abstracted, invisible object, like that which
 “ natural religion alone presents to us, cannot
 “ long actuate the mind, or be of any
 “ moment in life. To render the passion
 “ of continuance, we must find some method
 “ of affecting the senses and imagination
 “ tion

* The character of this author's philosophical writings, which I should not otherwise have attempted, may be given in his own words, where he speaks of the *Alcyphron* and other works of the ingenious and good Bishop Berkeley: “ They admit of no answer, and produce no conviction: “ their only effect is to cause that momentary amazement “ and irresolution and confusion, which is the result of “ Scepticism.” *Essays moral and political*, p. 240.

“ tion, and must embrace some historical
 “ as well as philosophical accounts of the
 “ Divinity. Popular superstitions,” says he,
 “ and observances are even found to be of
 “ use in this particular *.” The great thing
 to be wished, then, for the interest of virtue
 and the good of mankind, is, that the max-
 ims of natural religion should be fixed and
 assured by an authority that is decisive—
 that a rule of duty should be taught as the
 will and law of God—that the sanctions of
 this law, a future state and a judgment to
 come, should be known alike to all, both
 small and great—that the hopes of pardon
 should be assured to the penitent sinner—
 that there should be an institution to propa-
 gate this knowledge, and to spread it thro’
 the world—that there should be a publick
 worship set up, and a discipline and œco-
 nomy prescribed, to train men to piety and
 virtue: but all this, and much more to the
 advantage of virtue, we have in the Chris-
 tian religion. Can the author tell us where
 else they are to be found? If he is look-
 ing out a cure for superstition, I venture to
 assure him, that, with all his researches
 into metaphysics and morals, he will never
 find any equal to that religion which he en-
 deavours to explode; which in a few years
 did

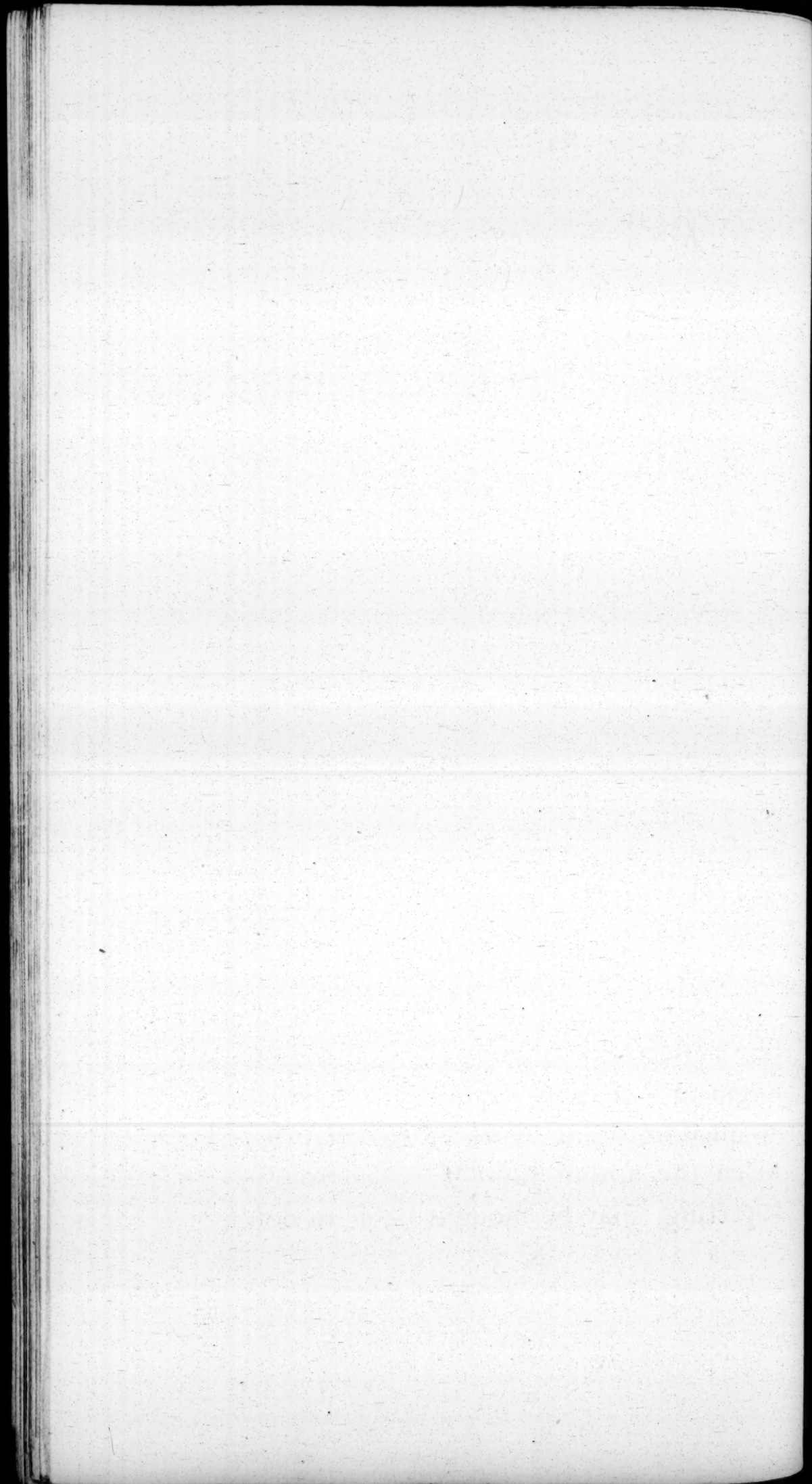
* *Essays moral and political*, p. 231.

did infinitely more towards freeing the world from the fear and folly of prodigies, omens, dreams, and oracles, than all the philosophy in the world had done in many ages. If, unhappily, this religion is still corrupted by superstitious mixtures, these I freely commit to the mercy of the author. But Christianity is not to answer for these any more than for the other errors and vices of mankind, which however it aims to correct, it does not pretend to eradicate. And even these will be better and more successfully opposed by fair argument and civility than with insult and reproach. Where a liberty of debate and free enquiry is allowed, it is unpardonable to insult the publick that allows it. “There is a degree of
 “doubt and caution and modesty, which
 “in all kinds of scrutiny and decision,
 “ought for ever to accompany a just reasoner*.”

* *Philosophical Essays*, p. 250.

THE
NATURE AND OBLIGATION
OF
V I R T U E.

A SERMON preached at St. CHAD's, SHREWSBURY, at the
primary Visitation of FREDERICK, Lord Bishop
of LICHFIELD and COVENTRY,
in the Year 1754.



TO the RIGHT REVEREND

F R E D E R I C K,

LORD BISHOP OF

LICHFIELD and COVENTRY.

MY LORD,

YOUR Lordship's approbation of the following discourse does great honour to it's author. He is not however so vain, as to promise himself that it will, upon a stricter scrutiny, appear in every point approved even to your Lordship's candour. In a long train of reasoning upon a subject as difficult and abstruse as any other, many things may appear, upon a transient hearing, to the quickest discernment fair and plausible, which will not bear a closer examination. Your Lordship's judgment will not therefore, it is hoped, be questioned, if some particulars in it, which the author himself is far from not suspecting, may be thought liable to doubt

cxxxiv DEDICATION.

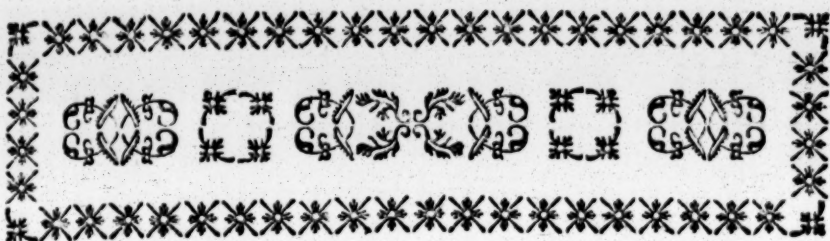
or exception. It was enough to recommend it to your Lordship's good opinion, if any new light appeared to be brought into a subject which has so much employed and divided the learned and inquisitive, or if only a fair attempt was made towards it. As such only he presumes to offer it to your Lordship and the publick, glad of the opportunity of professing to the world his sincere esteem and honour for your Lordship's amiable character.

I am, my LORD,

Your LORDSHIP'S

Dutiful and obedient Servant,

W. Adams.



ROMANS ii. 14, 15.

These, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.

THE Apostle here affirms of the
T Gentiles, that, though they were
strangers to the written or re-
vealed will of God, they had
yet a law to conduct themselves by, a
law written in their hearts; their consci-
ence with the right of a legislator dictat-
ing their duty, and their reason as a judge
acquitting or condemning them.

It is a general truth implied in this,
that all intelligent beings are a law to
themselves; that reason implies duty and
obligation; and that whoever by this light
K 4 can

can discern betwixt good and evil, must at the same time see that he is bound to pursue the one, and avoid the other. A careful attention to this great truth will clear up much of the difficulty that has been found in settling the first principles and foundation of morality, and in particular will, I think, lead us to the justest notions of the nature and obligation of virtue; a subject which, though much controverted, seems still to lie open for inquiry.

It is granted, that in life and conduct, in judging of manners and characters, men are generally agreed, and have nearly the same sentiments: and 'tis therefore less to be lamented, though the more to be wondered, that in the theory and speculation they so widely differ. Much of this difference, it is natural to think, may lie in the use of words, to which men assign different ideas, when in the things themselves they are agreed. It would, however, be easy to point out many dangerous consequences, that may arise from the principles sometimes laid down by writers on this subject, if their systems were adopted in practice; and will therefore be matter, not of curiosity only, but of great use, if we
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can learn to form just conceptions, and to express ourselves clearly and distinctly, on a subject confessedly of the greatest importance, and indeed fundamental to all religion, natural and revealed.

The mind of man is formed for contemplation and action: reason is his guide in both. In contemplating the beauty, order, and proportion of outward objects, we are obliged to use the instrumentality of our senses: and therefore, whether these are characters in the object of a fixed and positive kind, or depend in part on the senses, and are therefore so far arbitrary and factitious, we cannot perhaps determine. It may be possible, that what is now beauty to the eye, or harmony to the ear, might by a different formation of the organ have been made to appear deformity and discord.

But there is another field of contemplation, that is purely intellectual. Truth and virtue, which we discover by comparing the abstracted ideas of the mind, and contemplating the actions and characters of men, these are the province and peculiar of reason; which lie open in some degree to the lowest of rational beings, but are
far

far above the level of instinct, sense, or passion. Of these we may safely assert, that they are as fixed and unchangeable as reason itself. While reason continues what it is, truth and virtue will appear to it the same. The constancy and immutability of the former is plainly acknowledged and proved in the whole intercourse of men with each other: why else do we demand the assent of men to the most evident and demonstrated truths, if we were not certain that truth must appear the same, as far as it is understood, to all intelligent beings? Objects themselves may be changed or destroyed: but our reasonings concerning them will be equally true, whether they have any real, or only a possible existence. The faculty of perceiving truth may be destroyed, or reason may be taken from us: but, while this remains, truth will appear always the same. We may without arrogance affirm, that it is not in the power of the supreme Being to alter its nature: it is immutable and necessary, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*

In like manner, in contemplating actions and characters, right and wrong appear to the mind as certainly and as necessarily distinct

tinct from each other, as fixed and invariable in their nature. We are as certain that they must appear the same to all beings that have reason and understanding to receive the ideas, — that they are the same in all climates, in all ages, in all worlds. As every true proposition is universally true, so every right action, the same circumstances supposed, is universally right. It is not in the power of omnipotence itself to alter or invert it's nature, to transmute the character of right into wrong, or to make treachery, falsehood, and ingratitude appear in the same light with honesty, fidelity, and gratitude.

If it be asked, what it is that constitutes right, by what rule or standard it is to be measured and tried; the same may be equally questioned concerning truth. And, in answer to both, we may as well ask, by what criterion does the eye distinguish colours? The object is presented, and it's properties and qualities appear with it: the ideas of colour, shape, and proportion, that belong to it, necessarily arise in the mind. Actions are as plainly an object to the understanding; and, when surveyed or contemplated, their characters appear with them.

them. We necessarily see them under the character of right, indifferent, or wrong. This right in actions is not ordinarily discovered by any process of reason, but by simple perception: the understanding sees it: and we may as well ask of the most obvious quantities, why some are greater than other, why the square, for instance, is greater than the root, as why some actions are better than other.

In investigating truths, we set out with such as are known and acknowledged, and from thence infer others that are nearly, and then more remotely, connected with them. In proving the truth of any doubted proposition, we appeal to those that are more known, till we arrive at such as are seen or self-evident. But in morals almost the whole of duty appears with this first self-evidence: it is immediately seen and felt, and wants not by the slow deductions of reason to be proved.

There are indeed cases where different rights or duties interfere, in which the skill of the casuist or civilian is wanting to weigh the moments of each, and to judge upon the whole which claim preponderates.
But

But even here the several rights that are thus involved are distinctly seen by their own evidence; and the difficulty usually lies in assigning to each its due. The right and wrong in most actions stand out prominent and conspicuous even to a careless observer. Our duty appears by its own light, and is not left to be reasoned out or proved by inferring one truth from another.

However this be, whether right be, as I think, in all simple and unmixed cases immediately seen, or whether it be by a short process of the mind inferred, it is, I think, too evident to be doubted, that the characters of actions, as right or wrong, appear to the reasoning faculty with a light and evidence that cannot be resisted. Moral discernment is as natural and essential to reason, as logical. To suppose a man without the faculty of distinguishing truth from falsehood, is to suppose him void of reason and the powers of thought: to suppose him incapable of discerning right from wrong, is in like manner to divest him of understanding, and to degrade him to the level of brutes.

Reason

Reason then implies in it a knowledge of good and evil, and points out the former with authority under the idea of right; saying, *This is the way, walk ye in it.* Rational beings have a rule of action within them; and this rule is one and the same to all intelligent beings thro' the universe. We may say, with reverence, that God, who has no law, no superior to controul his will, is a law unto himself; his unerring reason directing, and his unbiaſſed will invariably purſuing, what is right. And the ſame reaſon, as far as he has imparted it in different degrees to his creatures, is their law, a law written in their minds; their conſcience witneſſing to it, and, as they obey or neglect it, accusing or elſe excuſing them. To do always what is right is the privilege and character of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs. Beings of a limited capacity are liable in all degrees to failure and imperfection, — to deviate in their judgment from truth, in their actions from right. Man in particular has many principles of action which in their influence run counter to reaſon, many importunate appetites and headſtrong paſſions ready to diſpute her authority, and to
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usurp the sovereignty over him. To keep these within proper bounds, to direct them to their true objects, and to subdue them to the governance of reason, this is virtue ; which may be defined the conformity of imperfect beings to the dictates of reason, or to right.

We say not of the divine Being, that he is virtuous : *he is righteous and holy in all his ways and works.* But virtue is a degrading character, when applied to the Deity. The reason is, that it implies trial and conflict. Virtue in every action is measured by the difficulty that attends it, and bears exact proportion to the effort that is made to surmount this difficulty. There would be no virtue in temperance, if there were no allurements to excess. Could we suppose man free from temptation, divest him of his appetites and passions, he might be then more perfect, because more easily swayed and governed by reason : but his best actions would no longer carry any proof of virtue in them. In like manner, as God has implanted many passions and good affections in the mind to excite us to duty, whatever good we do from these principles, and not from reason,

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so far is lost of the merit and virtue of the action. In proportion as the motives to duty are stronger, a stricter conformity to right will be necessary to give a proof of equal virtue in the agent: where more is given, more will be required: and the offering of a mite in some circumstances will outweigh a talent in others.

And, as this is of the essence and character of virtue, so, properly speaking, this is the only virtue. Temperance, justice, and the rest, are duties distinct in their nature and object: but virtue is in all these the same. If we are temperate from natural inclination, or complexion, if we give all our goods to feed the poor from any other consideration than that of conforming to our duty, there is so far no virtue in it. Actions themselves have no character, are no farther virtuous, than as they indicate virtue in the agent. But the only virtue there, is conformity to reason, or a steady and resolved adherence to what is right.

The next question then will be, what it is that makes this conformity a duty, or in what does the obligation to virtue and
right

right action consist? To this I answer, that right implies duty in it's idea. To perceive that an action is right, is to see a reason for doing it in the action itself, abstracted from all other considerations whatsoever. Now, this perception, this acknowledged rectitude in the action, is the very essence of obligation; that which commands the approbation and choice, and binds the conscience, of every rational being. External considerations or motives may make it our interest or prudence to act; but this alone can make or constitute duty. Right, indifferent, and wrong are specifically opposed to each other. A right action cannot therefore by the terms be indifferent: the bare omission of it, and not only the contrary action, is wrong, and carries self-condemnation along with it. The perception therefore of right implies duty. And this is the only obligation purely moral, the only obligation that there is any merit or virtue in complying with.

I am not here speaking of the force and efficacy of this principle, but of it's authority and pre-eminence. In the present corrupt and frail state of mankind there are, it is certain, many other principles

principles more prevailing, — *lusts of the flesh, which war against the spirit, and bring us into captivity to the law of sin.* But it is as certain, that, without these temptations to the contrary, reason would always govern; that, where she is unhappily overruled by lust or passion, she still maintains her right: and we are, even when we desert her service, obliged, in spite of ourselves, to acknowledge her authority as a law written in our hearts, and to submit to her reproaches, while our own thoughts accuse and condemn us. To act from reason, is to act with our own judgment, and, consequently, to be self-approved. To deviate from right, is to act contrary to our own sense of things, to act against the consent of our minds, and therefore is to be self-condemned.

But, if virtue be thus founded wholly on the reasonableness of action, may there not often appear reasons on the other side, that will cancel and over-rule this obligation? Will not prudence and duty be often found to interfere, and the same reason, which pronounces an action right to be done, at the same time declare it imprudence and folly to do it? Every man
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has a private end to pursue, and is made invincibly to love and desire his own happiness. If virtue then imply trial, difficulty, and self-denial, what shall oblige him to forego the pleasures that court his choice, for the sake of that virtue, which not only forbids them, but perhaps may expose him to real pain and trouble? Is he not rather in these circumstances obliged to consult his happiness, and to flee from pain and misery?

To this I answer, first, that nothing can bring us under an *obligation* to do what appears to our moral discernment wrong. It may be supposed our interest to do this; but it cannot be *supposed* our duty. For I ask, if some power, which we are unable to resist, should assume the command over us, and give us laws which are unrighteous and unjust, should we be under any obligation to obey him? should we not rather be obliged to shake off the yoke, and to resist such usurpation, if it were in our power? However then we might be swayed by fear or hope, it is plain that we are under an obligation to right, which is antecedent, and in order and nature superior, to all other. Power may compel,

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interest

interest may bribe, and pleasure persuade; but reason only can oblige: this is the only authority which rational beings can own, and to which they can owe obedience.

But, secondly, virtue, though exposed to many crosses and distresses, is yet not left so destitute and friendless as this objection supposes. If it implies trial and difficulty, it implies too victory in the trial, and a rational joy and triumph in its own integrity. Whatever we lose or suffer in the cause of virtue, our moral worth and excellence are increased in the same proportion. And this is no fantastic, chimerical good, but the most real and substantial we can possess. All other goods perish in the using; all other pleasures are lost in the enjoyment: but for these we are the happier and better for ever. Every improvement in virtue is an acquisition made which time cannot impair, nor rapine invade: and the virtuous triumph, with which the mind exults that has stood superior to temptation, is for the most part a sufficient compensation for the difficulties that attend it.

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I might here add the conscious sense that all other intelligent beings must approve such a conduct; the character, esteem, and love, that belong to it; which, though they carry no obligation in them, may yet be considered as natural functions of virtue, and ought to be laid in the balance against the motives of pleasure and interest, that would seduce us from our duty.

On the other hand, whatever is gained by deserting our duty is dearly paid for in that shame and remorse that attend it; which are real evils, and as severely felt as bodily pain and torture. "Whoever," says *Tully*, "violates the law of reason, renounces his nature, and will be rigorously chastised for his disobedience, though he may escape what we commonly call punishment." *

Thus far then moral and natural good go together. We are made not blindly to love ourselves, but to love what is amiable, good, and worthy in ourselves. The mind delights in it's own perfection, and can ac-

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quiesce

* Apud *Lactant.* Inst. Div. lib. 6. cap. 8.

quiesce in nothing else as an end or object worthy of it's pursuit. In proportion as it advances towards this end, it surveys itself with joy and gratulation: and, on the other hand, it cannot forgive or be at peace with itself, while it acts unworthily: it necessarily laments every fall from virtue, as a proof of weakness and degeneracy, and, in proportion to this sense and feeling of ill-desert, becomes the object of it's own contempt and hatred.

The pleasures which I have mentioned, of self-esteem and joy in our own worth, which are peculiar to virtue, seem to be purely rational, — not to proceed from passion, or any inferior principle in our nature, but from reason only: and therefore, though they cannot be the ground of virtue, or come within the notion of obligation, yet are they pleasures of the purest kind, and seem much less than any external motive to take from the merit of virtue. The love of virtue is the purest principle of virtue; and therefore the love of virtue in ourselves is so far a virtuous self-love.

But it must be confessed, that, as these pleasures are purely rational, so considered
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as an adequate sanction to virtue, they are adapted only to beings that are purely rational. Man, to return to the objection, is a sensible as well as intellectual being; subject, as such, to many wants and infirmities, to much pain and misery: and virtue is not only left exposed to these, but they are sometimes the certain effect and consequence of it. The best of men therefore, however cheered by the consolations of virtue, may be unhappy in a great degree under the common wants and sufferings of life. In these circumstances it seems necessary to give up the obligations of virtue, or to allow that man is an ill-constituted being; those who deserve best being necessarily miserable, either by forfeiting their virtue, and incurring the reproach of their own hearts, or exposing themselves by their adherence to it to the evils of life.

But here, thirdly, religion comes in to our aid: which teaches us, that we are under the government of a wise and good being; that virtue is his will, a necessary, but sure title to his favour; that, whatever inequalities appear in this life, all will be adjusted in another, in which every one shall receive according to his deeds. This,

which reason alone might teach to the wise and prudent, God has revealed also unto babes. Here then the objection before us vanishes: virtue and happiness are found at last to coincide, and the scheme of moral duty and obligation to be consistent with the nature and constitution of man.

But, if these principles are necessary to the support of virtue, are they not, it will be inquired, the proper ground and obligation of it? Are not the authority of God, his right to give laws to his creatures, and his power of dispensing eternal rewards and punishments, the surest foundation to build morality upon? To this it must be answered, that the sovereign perfections of God are undoubtedly a reason for the highest reverence and homage we can pay him, the lowest prostration of heart and mind that we can express before him. The most perfect submission is due to *his* will, who is wisdom and goodness itself; the most entire devotion to his service, who made us what we are, and gave us all that we possess. But these duties derive their obligation from the principle we have been establishing. It is in the highest degree reasonable, that we resign our will,
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and even our reason, to his will, who, we are previously assured, can ordain nothing but what is right and good: and therefore all his commands, even though we should not be able to discern the reason and equity of them, have a claim to our obedience. It is meet and right, that we pay a chearful submission to his will, to whom we owe our very selves, and all our powers of acting and thinking. Obedience then to the will of God, when revealed or known, is upon this principle the first and highest duty of all created beings. The authority of God, as our creator and governor, his wisdom and goodness, are so many additional obligations to virtue. But, however these obligations are multiplied, they are still one in kind, deriving all their force from reason and right.

With respect to the last principle here mentioned, the sanctions of rewards and punishments which God has annexed to his laws, these have not in any proper sense the nature of obligation. They are only motives to virtue, adapted to the state and condition, the weakness and insensibility, of man. They do not make or constitute duty, but presuppose it. To act against
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them is not so properly sin, as folly and madness. It will follow likewise, as I am forced to acknowledge, that to act merely from these motives, without any regard to reason or conscience, if this were possible, is not virtue, however it might be thought prudence or interest. These are, however, the best helps to virtue, as they serve to awaken the attention of thoughtless mankind, to call them off from the cares and pleasures in which they are immersed, and from sensible to spiritual objects. When the mind is turned to contemplate virtue, it's obligations will appear with it; we shall necessarily approve it for it's own sake; and our reason and understanding will be brought into captivity to it. Besides, the nature of man is such, that, by whatever means he is brought into a certain course and tenor of action, it will soon become his pleasure and choice. An uniform practice of duty will make it natural and habitual to us, and will soon induce a love of it. We shall insensibly adopt the true principle of virtue, and learn to be subject for conscience sake.

The conclusions that most deserve our notice, from what has been said, are,
First,

First, that virtue, and the obligation of it, are not founded in will, or power, or in the arbitrary appointment of any being whatsoever; that the laws of God himself are not therefore righteous, merely because they are commanded, but are therefore commanded, because they are antecedently and in their own nature righteous. Reason and right are the eternal rule of action by which the will of God himself is directed. To act invariably by this rule, is infinite goodness, righteousness, and moral perfection: and therefore to ascribe this to God, is to pay him the honour due unto his name. This universal rule applies itself differently to the different ranks and systems of intelligent beings, and will call for very different duties, according to their different capacities, relations, and circumstances. The end and design of revelation is to give the highest explicit authority to this rule, as well as to adapt it to the nature and condition of man, and to provide for his infirmities and wants in the practice of it. By it's aptitude to this end every religion must be tried. To this test the scriptures appeal, as a necessary proof of their truth. And this is the characteristic

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excellence and the great internal evidence of Christianity, that all it's precepts, doctrines, and instituted duties are calculated in the highest manner to promote moral righteousness. Upon this principle are founded all the claims of merit and excellence which it asserts to itself; that *it's statutes are right, and rejoice the heart; that they are just and true and righteous altogether; that the righteousness of it's testimonies is everlasting, and it's law is truth,*

A second consequence from what has been said is, that virtue and it's obligation are not founded in any good affections, such as benevolence, compassion, and the like; nor in any blind impulse, instinct, or moral sense. By this latter indeed, if we understand the different sentiments towards right and wrong in the understanding, this will coincide with the principle which we have been explaining. But, if be meant by it only an instinctive approbation of virtue, and a certain refined taste for the beauties and excellencies of it, as it is generally explained by those who defend it, this is to make the nature of virtue wholly precarious and arbitrary, to suppose that men might have been intelligent beings

ings without any attachment to it, or even with sentiments and affections wholly inverted, and directed to the contrary objects; since the pleasing sensations, which are now the incitement and sanction of virtue, might consistently with this hypothesis have been given to it's contrary.

There is a third opinion not less repugnant to the principles we have been asserting, which places the essence of virtue in a conformity of our actions and affections to the publick good, and the obligation or sole motive to the practice of it in the present feeling or future prospect of private happiness. But, not to mention that these principles of action seem but ill to agree together, piety and temperance, two very comprehensive duties, will have but a very precarious foundation in this system: and of the more social duties, justice, fidelity, gratitude, we may surely affirm, that these appear to the conscience of every man to be indispensable and necessary, without inquiring into their consequences, either on our own, or the happiness of others. It is true, that God has so wisely ordered the frame and constitution of things, that the practice of virtue has the most natural and
general

general tendency to promote happiness among men. But this connection is not necessary, nor in many particular cases certain: and the foundation of virtue cannot be any thing that is precarious and contingent.

If men are left to infer their duty from any such relation, they will find many ready expedients to evade it. Single instances of duty will be thought of little influence to the publick: it will appear fair and right to commute for private vices by publick benefits: and fraud and imposture will be authorized, as oft as the common good is thought promoted by it. In fact, upon this principle it certainly is, that men have allowed themselves in the practice of pious forgeries; that persecution is justified in the cause of religion; and that publick faith and truth are so often and openly sacrificed to publick utility. And it is therefore against this species of self-deceit that the Apostle has addressed a very particular caution — *not to do evil, that good may come.*

I have just observed, that the two principles here laid down, instead of bearing so close an affinity, seem rather to have an
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unfriendly aspect towards each other. A love of ourselves is not in it's natural influence any motive to the good of others : nor is the good of others any direct means of procuring happiness to ourselves. But, however these may be reconciled by religion, and self-love and social be made at last the same, we shall still by the first of these principles be bound in duty to consult our present happiness, as far as it can consist with the publick good. It will be not only innocent and prudent, but virtue, to do so, and immoral to neglect it. And, on the other hand, the duties of life which expose us to most trouble and self-denial, instead of having the greater, will have the less virtue in them : for, as far as they interrupt our happiness, we shall act contrary to our obligations in performing them. These consequences must follow : for, if our own happiness be the only reason for consulting that of others, it must be this reason that makes it duty ; and, consequently, to consult our own happiness must be of prior obligation, and a more indispensable duty.

The advocates of this new system have with great force of reason and eloquence de-

demonstrated, that no other motive but a prospect of final happiness can effectually excite to the practice of virtue: but, unhappily, the difference betwixt motive and obligation has been overlooked; which are so far from being the same, that the former are chiefly addressed, and owe their influence, to the passions; while the latter applies itself solely, and owes all its authority, to the understanding. The wisdom and expediency of religious sanctions, as motives to virtue, must with all reverence and thankfulness be acknowledged; and that virtue, too little practised under these influences, would be ill-supported without them. But still these are but subsidiary to virtue; the nature and duty of which must be first supposed; and then these are added, not to give authority or obligation, but force and influence, or to procure that attention and obedience which are due to it.

A fourth conclusion, which I shall presume to offer, from what has been said, is, that, when virtue is said to consist in a conformity to truth, in acting agreeably to the truth of the case, to the reason, truth, or fitness of things, there is, if not inaccuracy, yet something of obscurity in the
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expression. It is certain, that, in every virtuous action, truth, or a conviction that the action is right, is the principle or reason upon which we act. But the character of the action, and, consequently, the measure and standard of it, is not truth, but right: nor does the virtue of it consist in a conformity to truth, as such, though it may be said to consist in a conformity to some particular truth, or rule of duty, prescribing what is right. Truth is a term of wider extent than right. The character of wisdom or prudence, of skill in any art or profession, are as well founded in a regard to truth, and imply the acting agreeably to the nature and reason of things: yet are these ideas certainly distinct from that of goodness, or moral rectitude. The man who builds according to the principles of geometry acts as agreeably to truth, and he who should transgress the rules of architecture, as much violates truth, as he who acts agreeably to the duty of gratitude, or contrary to it: but in the former of these instances the conformity to truth is not virtue, but skill; the deflection from it is not vice, but ignorance or folly. In every truth, which carries moral obligation, right or duty, or something syno-

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nymous, must be expressed or understood. If virtue therefore be defined a conformity to truth, it is to such moral truth only as points out what is right. It is the conformity to what reason dictates as right, not what it teaches for true. And this character of actions depends not on any previous truth or reason of things; but it's connection with every species of action, or contrariety to it, is, as I have above intimated, immediately seen by it's own light.

There is yet another sense, very different from this, in which morality has been resolved into truth; which supposes every action to be directly affirming or denying some truth, and accordingly, as it expresses what is true or false, to be right or wrong. Thus the man who injures or designedly hurts another unprovoked, is therefore guilty of a crime, because he virtually affirms the man to be his enemy, when he is not. But, beside that this language of actions is often very equivocal and uncertain, it is plain that in this, and the like may be said of every other case that can be put, the action must be supposed previously wrong, before it can by any construction be made out to be false. For why is this affirming
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the injured person to be an enemy, but because an innocent person deserves not such treatment, or, in other words, it is contrary to right to treat him thus? It is this last truth by which the action is condemned, and by the violation of which alone it has the character of guilt derived upon it.

I am unwilling to dismiss this subject without pointing out some of its uses in practice.

First then, let us learn from hence to reverence virtue wherever we find it; not only among those of our own persuasion, sect, or party, but wherever by the force of reason it breaks thro' the impressions of a false, or rejoices in the light of true religion. The seed and principle of virtue, the Apostle has taught us in the text, is sown alike in all; and he seems as plainly to intimate that the poorest Heathen is born to the like hopes and expectations with ourselves. He here tells us, that the Gentiles, which have not the law, may do by nature, by natural reason only, the things contained in, or the moral duties of, the law; that, where this is the case, *their un-*

circumcision shall be counted for circumcision: that is, those among the Heathen, who live up to the light which God has given them, in fulfilling the moral duties of religion, shall be accepted of God, though they are not in covenant with him as members of his church. They may even by a lower degree of obedience give equal proof of virtue with those who are favoured with higher lights and advantages, and shall accordingly be judged hereafter according to what they have, and not according to what they have not;—those who have lived under the law, by the law; and those who have lived without the law, without the law. They set out behind us, if I may so express myself, in the great race of virtue, happiness, and perfection, which lies for ever and without end before us: but they may by their diligence or our slothfulness overtake us in this world, and be placed, for their reward, far before us in the next. Thus our Saviour hath told us, there are first which shall be last, and last which shall be first: *Many, saith he, shall come in that day from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; and the children of the kingdom shall be cast out.*

out. Instead therefore of despising the error and ignorance of others, let their virtue rather provoke us to jealousy and emulation. Instead of placing a vain security in our superior knowledge, and in the present favour of God, let us take heed to ourselves that we make the best use of the advantages we enjoy, that we lose not the things which we have gained, and that no man take our crown from us.

Secondly, let us ever remember that the design of religion is to promote the practice of moral righteousness, and to give weight to the eternal duties of morality. This is the one end of all it's doctrines and ordinances, as well as of it's precepts. In applying it's doctrines to ourselves, or addressing them to others, we should therefore inquire to what uses of piety and virtue they are directed, how the heart may be amended, as well as the mind instructed, by them; in the instituted duties of it, what was the end and design of their appointment, what lesson were they intended to teach us, what motives and incitements to godliness to bring to our minds. By thus applying them to their proper ends, and giving them their due force and direction,

rection, we shall find them very powerful instruments in the support and advancement of our virtue, of great use and efficacy in spiritualizing our affections, and weaning them from the things of this world. But to rest in the belief of opinions, or the practice of ceremonies, as an end, is to mistake their nature, and to lose their use and benefit. To substitute them in the place of real righteousness, is to pervert them into gross superstition.

Lastly, if we would increase in virtue and true piety, let us carefully examine our actions by their true standard, and endeavour to strengthen and improve the virtuous principle within us. Let us remember, that to have kind affections, to be smitten with the beauty and excellence of virtue, is not virtue: but to cherish and encourage these within their proper limits, to attend to the ends and uses for which they were given us, and to enter into the wisdom and design of God in giving them, this is virtue. Every attention to improvement, every endeavour after virtue, is virtue itself. In like manner, to have the justest sense of right and wrong, to have the clearest convictions of duty in the mind,

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is not virtue : but to endeavour to improve this sense by reason and reflection, to keep the virtuous principle ever awake and active in our breasts, this is virtue ; and a duty of the greatest importance. The imperfection of our nature requires it. In active life we are exposed to so many temptations, that, if we attend not to this, our virtue will be ever in danger. In retirement temptations will be fewer : but this may be the more necessary, as it is then perhaps the only proof we can give of our obedience. For what assurance can we have in our virtue, when it is never called to the trial, unless we frequently examine our hearts, and root the principles of it deep in the mind ? A life of action is the school and theatre of virtue. But, when we have not the opportunity of forming good dispositions into habits by exercise and practice, we may do it in a good degree by contemplation, and especially by the exercises of devotion and religion ; which, besides that they are duties indispensable and necessary in all, are also the direct means to sanctify the heart.* In this situation we ought studiously to embrace, and even seek out, all opportunities of doing good. Those who have no temptati-

ons to ill should be active to their power in well-doing, and not spend their days in indolence and thoughtlessness, which will infallibly enervate the mind, rob it of all it's virtue, and leave it exposed in the day of trial. Thus, by attending carefully to the improvement of the mind, and by observing a proper discipline and œconomy in the government of ourselves, we shall, whether we mix with the world, be armed against it's temptations, or, whether sheltered from these in retirement, shall strengthen and increase the virtuous principle within us. In both we shall secure the blessing of God on our endeavours, shall proceed from strength to strength in virtue, shall attain to the things that are more excellent, and go on to perfection.

APPENDIX,



A P P E N D I X.

THE subject of the foregoing discourse being closely connected with many questions of difficulty and importance, some of the principal of these it is the design of the following notes to illustrate.

Note to page 143. “ We say not of the “ divine Being, that he is virtuous. — The “ reason is, that it implies trial and con- “ flict. Virtue in every action is measur- “ ed by the difficulty that attends it.”

But will it not follow from these principles, that virtue and moral perfection are quite different things, since the latter may certainly and must be ascribed to the Deity, though the former, as is here asserted, cannot? And again, if the measure of virtue be the difficulty encountered,
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will it not seem, that, as men increase in moral perfection, they may decrease in virtue, since the difficulty of virtue by use and habit becomes less?

To remove these difficulties, let it be observed, that virtue is not properly the character of actions, but rectitude. The virtue of actions is, properly speaking, only that degree of virtue in the agent, which is exerted in performing them: and this must be measured by the difficulty encountered and subdued. But the whole or sum of virtue in the agent is not to be measured by the difficulties that are surmounted, but by those which it is able to surmount, by the power and sufficiency of the agent to overcome difficulties, trials, and temptations; and therefore may be supposed in any degree, where it is not tried by any difficulty at all: for the habit and character of virtue, or the strength of the virtuous principle, may be increased, not only by actual exercise and trial, but, as before observed, by reflection, attention to moral truths, or a right use of our reasoning powers. The force of this principle, as it resides in the hidden man of the heart, can be known only to God, the
searcher

searcher of hearts. To men the virtue of others can be known and estimated only by their actions; which, though not an accurate measure of virtue, is the only measure they can apply: and, the virtue of these being measured by the difficulties attending them, hence in common language virtue always implies trial and difficulty, and is affirmed only of such beings, as are supposed liable to temptation, and capable of sin. But virtue, considered simply in itself, as a moral power of resisting and conquering difficulties, this is throughout the same with moral perfection, righteousness, or goodness, and may be equally ascribed to the supreme Being, whose moral rectitude is more than sufficient to conquer all difficulties.

With respect to the other difficulty mentioned, it is certain, that, as the habits of virtue increase, the difficulty of it in every single instance will decrease. But it is as certain, that the virtue of these habits will bear exact proportion to the difficulties encountered in forming them. And if, in the several repeated acts by which any habit of virtue is formed, the last act of virtue be attended with less difficulty than the former,

former, this facility is itself to be considered as a distinct proof of the prevalence of virtue in the agent ; and, in estimating the force of the virtuous principle, is to be added to the difficulty of the action. Thus, if to abstain from any unlawful pleasure be twice as easy, the same circumstances of temptation and the same natural advantages or abilities supposed, as it was formerly, this is a proof of twice the virtue in the agent ; in like manner as, in trying the natural strength of men, he that can lift or remove a given weight with twice the ease that another can, has twice the strength. Thus then the matter seems to stand : when it is said, that the virtue of actions is measured by the difficulty that attends them, this is as near the truth, as in common speaking we do, or need to go : for the facility of performing duty, acquired by use and habit, cannot be known or estimated by us. But it is not accurately true, unless all external circumstances, and all the circumstances of the agent likewise, that is, all his acquired as well as natural abilities, be supposed the same ; or unless to the difficulty of the action, simply considered, be added the facility with which it is performed.

NOTE

NOTE II.

P. 150. "The pleasures, which I have
 "mentioned, of self-esteem and joy in our
 "own worth, are motives of the purest
 "kind, &c."

But, if virtue be always attended with present pleasure, will not our best actions at last be founded in self-love? And how shall we reconcile this with that disinterestedness, which, upon the principle we have laid down, seems almost necessary and essential to it?

In answer to this, it may perhaps be enough to observe, that we cannot conceive the most perfect reason, acting upon the purest principles, not to receive pleasure from virtue. To act against reason or duty must give pain and regret to every intelligent being; and, for the same reason, to conform to right or duty must give pleasure. The enjoyment therefore of this pleasure, if there be any such thing as virtue, must be consistent with the highest perfection of it. But, to trace this matter as far as we can, it will be proper to consider

consider the several senses in which an agent or action may be said to be disinterested. To be absolutely disinterested, in the largest sense of the word, or to be indifferent to pleasure and pain, is plainly incompatible with the nature of any being whatsoever, and therefore cannot be necessary to virtue. To prefer misery, or to love it equally with happiness, is a contradiction in terms. An agent is then disinterested, in the strictest possible sense of the word, when in any particular action his own interest is in no degree the motive, end, or object of it: and, secondly, in a looser sense, when the action or intention of the agent does not interfere with the interest of others; or more so, when their interest is at least in part consulted by it; and still in a higher degree, when any part of his own interest is voluntarily sacrificed to it.

In the latter of these senses the disinterestedness of virtue will be easily made out. The pleasures that belong to it can never interfere with the pleasure or happiness of another; and to intend injury to any is totally inconsistent with it. In most cases the interest of others is at least in part the immediate object of it, and usually

ly at some expence of ease, happiness, or present interest of our own. There is a chapter in * *Aristotle's Ethics*, in which this subject is professedly treated, and with the usual acuteness of that philosopher: "The mind," says he, "is our proper self: and he that follows this governing principle may therefore be said to gratify and love himself, more properly than he who obeys his appetites and passions, which are at best but an inferior part of of our nature. The man who divides his fortune with his friend is the greater benefactor to himself: he makes his friend only the richer by his bounty, but makes himself the better man. In like manner, the man who gives up his life for his friend or his country, prefers the satisfaction of being greatly good to all the pleasures that an inglorious life can give him: he chuses to enjoy virtue for a year or for a day, rather than a whole life that is useless, or spent in vicious pleasures." There is then, according to this excellent reasoner, a virtuous as well as a vicious self-love: and to prefer the pleasures of virtue to every other interest is

* *Ad Nicomach.* lib. 9. cap. 8.

is all that is necessary to the highest degree of virtue.

But we may, I think, go farther, and assert the disinterestedness of virtue in the first and strictest sense. For, 1. the pleasures of self-approbation and esteem, which follow virtue, certainly arise from a conscious sense of having made virtue, and not pleasure, our choice; not from preferring one interest or pleasure to another, but from acting according to right, without any other consideration whatsoever. It seems essential to this pleasure, that no motive of interest have any part in the choice or intention of the agent. And, 2. to make this pleasure an object to the mind, the virtue, whose principle we are seeking after, must be already formed. For let it be observed, that the pleasures we are speaking of are themselves virtuous pleasures; such as none but virtuous minds are capable of proposing to themselves, or of enjoying. To the sensual and voluptuary the pleasures that arise from denying our appetites or passions have no existence. These cannot therefore be the motive to that virtue which is already presupposed. On the contrary, they owe their rise and
existence

existence to the same principle or cause with virtue itself. It is the same love of virtue which makes it first the object of our pursuit, and, when acquired, the subject of our triumph and joy. To do a virtuous action for the sake of these virtuous pleasures, is to chuse virtue for the sake of being virtuous; which is to rest in it as an end, or to pursue it without regard to any other object or interest.

NOTE III.

P. 153. "The sanctions of rewards and punishments, which God has annexed to his laws, have not in any proper sense the nature of obligation, &c."

The belief of a God and a future state, though no way necessary to the nature or obligation of virtue, is yet, without question, of absolute necessity to support it in practice. This hath been already so fully allowed, and is so universally acknowledged, that I need not enlarge upon it. But is not this then a motive of interest? And will not an object of such infinite concern as the prospect of eternal rewards and punishments, be apt to engross our whole attention, and, by excluding or superseding the virtuous principle, annihilate that vir-
N
tue

tue which it is said to support? As this has been thought a question of great difficulty, it will deserve a particular attention.

First then, it is certain, that the force of this motive is by no means so great as is here supposed. Were these momentous objects present to our view, or had we any sensible experience of them, our liberty, it might be thought, would be over-ruled: our passions would be so strongly excited, that there would be no room for reason or virtue to act. But, with respect to the things of another life, we walk by faith, not by sight. The distance of these in prospect, and the darkness in which they are involved, diminish them to our view, and reduce their influence on the lives of men, in comparison, to very little. As they cannot be objected to our senses, so neither can they be pictured out by the imagination, the only instrument by which distant objects excite and move the passions. Hence our attention is left open to all the sollicitations of sense and appetite, and there is ample room left for the exercise and trial of our virtue. On the other hand, we are not only at liberty to attend to the purer principles of virtue, but it seems

seems a principal end and effect of these external motives to awaken and turn our attention to these principles, and to give them their full force on the mind: and whoever is by the joint influence of these motives reclaimed from vice, and not only entered upon a course of virtuous action, but confirmed in the steady practice and habit of it, will, I doubt not, owe more of his virtue to the latter of these principles, than to the former. I am persuaded, that no one ever repented of the folly of sin, without repenting at the same time of the guilt, and feeling the shame of having acted unworthily; and that we never forsake, without abhorring, that which is evil.

Secondly, if we have any idea at all of the happiness of a future state, it is that of virtuous exercise and virtuous enjoyment. We can form no other conception of the happiness of angels, but that of a more exalted piety and benevolence, exerting themselves in a more exalted and extended sphere. But to make this our object and aim is, as we have seen, entirely consistent with virtue. It is a motive only to virtuous minds; and, as it owes its force to the principle of virtue already rooted in the mind, so

it will reciprocally strengthen this principle within us. Indeed, our hopes and fears in another life, whatever be supposed the object of them, will be found in great part to derive their force from the love of God and goodness. It is a love of goodness that makes us attribute this as a perfection to the Deity; and it is from this perfection alone that we expect a reward to virtue. And again, in proportion as we love virtue ourselves, we shall think it the object of the love and favour of God; and, in proportion as we hate sin, we shall think it the object of his displeasure.

Thirdly, our hopes in another life, as far as they have no certain or determinate object, will be found to be nothing more than a pious trust or implicit faith in the goodness of God: for it is on this at last that our future expectations are built. And even our future fears, as far as they are a motive of action, and lead to repentance, will resolve into the same principle, and must imply a belief in the goodness of God, and trust in his mercy. But this trust or faith in God is a duty we owe him, and an act of piety and true virtue. To believe in him whom we have not seen; to
 resign

reſign all our cares and intereſts into his hands ; to commit our ſouls unto him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator, unmoved by pleaſure, unſhaken by pain ; to maintain our allegiance to heaven, when we ſeem moſt forſaken by it, under torture of body, and dejection of mind ; this is the virtue of faith, and is doing the greateſt honour we can to the goodneſs and truth of God : and, as it is the higheſt character to which human virtue, or perhaps any other, can aſpire, ſo, whatever there may be of intereſtedneſs, there is certainly more of the love of God and goodneſs, than of any other principle in it.

Should the laws of our country inculcate virtue, and threaten vice with puniſhment ; and ſhould a righteous and perfect adminiſtration inſure favour and reward to the good, and the merited infliction of puniſhment on the bad ; a good ſubject, who wanted not theſe motives or reſtraints, would love his duty the more : and, when he conſiders virtue as the principle in the lawgiver or prince, from which theſe ſalutary laws derive their exiſtence and their force, as that which gives peace and order

to the society in which he lives, his love and esteem for virtue will still increase : he will love his prince for the character or goodness that belongs to him, will delight in pleasing, and fear to displease him ; which is another addition of strength to the virtuous principle. His love for virtue then, considered as an object in itself, and his attachment to his duty, will be greatly increased, at the same time that his hopes and fears have another object presented to them, which has a distinct weight and force. In the mean time the bad under such a government will be reclaimed. If he has incurred guilt, and the penalty annexed to it, his only refuge will be in goodness ; in the goodness of his prince, and in his own reformation, or a new principle of goodness wrought in his mind. In the end true virtue only will be rewarded, and the incorrigible offender alone punished. In like manner, the virtuous mind, when it considers virtue as the law of God, and as the object of his love, will naturally love it the more ; and, when he considers goodness or rectitude as a law to God himself, as the ruling principle of the Deity, as the fountain of eternal order and harmony thro' the universe, his love will
rise

rise into adoration: he will hearken with more reverence and devotion to the everlasting law of reason, which reigns with such sovereign authority over heaven and earth; his duty will appear still more the glory of his nature; and sin will seem more exceeding sinful: and when, farther, he considers this supreme Judge of merit as a witness not only to his outward actions, but to the secret motions of the heart, he will be more careful to purify the inner man, and to establish the true principle of virtue there. The belief therefore of a righteous Providence and a future state is so far from extinguishing or debasing the virtuous principle, that it highly strengthens and exalts it.

And therefore, lastly, if revelation gives new evidence to these doctrines, it so far contributes to the advantage and improvement of virtue: and these are indeed every where consulted, and provided for, by it. If it has set the prospects of a future state in a clearer light, it has at the same time more strongly represented the reasonableness of our duty, and the excellence and god-like nature of virtue. It has set the love of God before us in many new and

more engaging lights, and in return calls for all our love and gratitude, and every generous affection of the heart, in his service. The promises it makes are not to the outward act and appearance, but to the habit and character of virtue. We are required to give God the heart; to love him, and, of consequence, to love our duty, with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength: we are taught that, if we give all our goods to feed the poor, without the true principle of charity, it will be nothing worth. If it commands our attention to the recompence of reward, it is to raise us above the weakness of human nature; it is to keep the love of God and virtue alive under the severest trials; to prepare us to cut off a right hand, and to pluck out a right eye, to part with houses and lands, with wife and children, for conscience and virtue's sake. In these circumstances it is a necessary help and advantage to the cause of virtue, and entirely consistent with all its interests, to have our duty, on the one hand, clearly marked out in its full extent, that we may not by the delusions of self-love be led to contract the sphere, or soften the rigour of it; and, on the other hand, that wisdom may be justified

fied of her children, to be assured that merit and happiness, virtue and prudence, will at last coincide.

Upon the whole, the belief of a God and a future state are so closely connected with the first principles of reason, that it may be reckoned almost inseparable from it: and hence, in fact, these doctrines have been almost universally received among men. And it is as certain, that a sense of merit and good-desert in virtue is likewise universal and inseparable from reason. These doctrines therefore must be consistent, and stand in the fairest agreement together. To do what is right, because it is right, and to believe that the Governor of the world will do so too, are principles that can never thwart or oppose, but must mutually strengthen and confirm each other: they are in reason and nature united, and make up jointly the source and perfection of virtue.

NOTE IV.

P. 160. " When virtue is said to consist in a conformity to truth, to the truth of the case, to the reason and nature of things,

“ things, there is, if not impropriety,
 “ something of obscurity or inaccuracy in
 “ the expression.”

Obligation in morals is not indiscriminately any reason for acting, but such a reason only, as makes the action duty, and the performance of it virtue. This reason must be an immediate or more remote connection between the action and duty or right. For, when you ask whether any particular action is duty, or obliges as such; how can this be proved, but by shewing it's connection with some known duty, or in the last resort, as in the case of all first truths, appealing to the conscience and reason of every man? It seems therefore too general and loose a way of speaking to make virtue consist in an agreement with truth, or the reason of things; when the only reason that carries obligation in it is in all cases the rectitude or goodness of the action, and the only truth which binds to action is that which points out the connection betwixt the action and this rectitude: and this relation betwixt the action and right, and no other, is that foundation in the reason and nature of things,

things, upon which all moral obligation is built. To explain this more fully, let us see what is properly meant by the reason and nature of things, and by acting agreeably to them.

There is an old maxim in the schools, which is full of good sense : *Essentiæ rerum sunt æternæ*. The nature of man is for ever the same ; that is, the ideas which make up the definition of a man will be always the same, whether any such being actually exist, or not. The third book of *Euclid* would be equally true, if no such thing as a perfect circle ever existed. The existence of any thing, as a triangle or circle, only supposed, a number of properties, relations, and truths depending on these, will result with it. The real connection or relation betwixt things or ideas is truth or reason in the object, or what we mean by the reason or truth of things. Reason is the faculty of perceiving, comparing, and observing the connection betwixt these ideas. Right reason is this faculty free from, and uncorrupted by prejudice, &c. and seeing these connections as they really are.

Here

Here then it is plain, that from the relations and habitudes of things and persons to each other, actions take a different name and character. What is in some cases justice, will in others be called murder or parricide: of consequence, as the situation or circumstances of the agent vary, his obligations will vary with them. But the rule of duty never varies. The connection between every species of action and the ideas of right and wrong is always the same: for in the idea of every moral action the circumstances of the agent are always included. And this connection is as much founded in the nature of things, as any truth whatsoever. Were there but one agent in the universe, and, consequently, no such thing as giving and receiving benefits, the nature of gratitude would be the same that it is now: it would be as true then, as it is now, that the party who receives a benefit ought to requite it with love and kindness to his benefactor. It is then an eternal truth, that gratitude is right or duty. Hence it is rightly said, that this duty is founded in the nature and relation of things, or that there is a reason in nature for performing it. But this reason

son I suppose to be nothing else but the agreement betwixt the idea of gratitude and right, or the conformity of the action to the idea of right. The relation betwixt the party obliged and his benefactor, makes the action gratitude, and, *by consequence*, brings him under obligation ; because gratitude is duty : but the immediate ground of obligation is not this relation, but the connection betwixt gratitude and right. Hence, in all language, the man who acts virtuously is said to act right, or agreeably to what is right and duty. And this appears to me more proper, than to say that he acts according to truth ; and more clear and distinct, than to say that he acts according to the reason and nature of things ; the meaning of which will, I think, in all cases be found to be only this, — that he acts according to what reason, in the present circumstances of the agent, and the relation he stands in to the object before him, pronounces to be right.

NOTE V.

P. 162. “ And this character of actions
 “ depends not on any previous truth or
 “ reason”

“ reason of things ; but it’s connection
 “ with every species of action, or contra-
 “ riety to it, is immediately seen by it’s
 “ own light.”

Right is a simple uncompounded idea, and, consequently, cannot be explained but by example. In considering the actions of men, the mind forms to itself general abstracted ideas of gratitude, justice, mercy, temperance, and the contrary to these. Again, in comparing these, it finds other more general characters, in which they agree or disagree. Such are those of right, wise, good, and the contrary. The last of these characters being an equivocal term, and signifying either the goodness of the action in itself, or it’s relative goodness to the agent or others, the first of these senses is what we mean, and is better expressed by the word right. The connection betwixt which and the several species of action above-mentioned being intuitively seen, the several truths resulting from it, such as, gratitude is right, &c. will form so many general rules of action ; and these are self-evident or first truths, from which there can lie no appeal, and for the truth of which there is no previous truth to appeal

peal to. Hence the rule of duty in all common cases is clear to every understanding, and will be found, if I mistake not, in all its complications to depend upon a very few principles, which are simple, easy, and obvious to all capacities.

We know from our own sense and feeling in what the happiness or good of others consists. Then, that every man's life, health, ease, &c. are his own, and not another's — that he has a right to defend them against every invader — that to invade them without provocation is wrong — that to contribute to these, or any other way to promote the good or happiness of others, is right — these truths are so closely connected, that they run into each other, and seem almost the same. It is then a self-evident truth, that to do good, or to communicate happiness, is right or duty; and to have done it is virtue or merit; that is, deserves love and gratitude from the party who receives the benefit, and esteem from every other. But in the first of these principles are included all the duties of charity; compassion, forgiveness, &c. — in the latter all the duties of piety; adoration, thanksgiving, resignation, &c. For these

these are inseparable from that gratitude which we owe to God, and the esteem which is due to his moral perfections, to that goodness and mercy which are shed over all his works.

Piety and benevolence are duties equally incumbent on all intelligent creatures. Temperance is a duty respecting only such rational beings as have appetites and passions to govern, and consists in governing them as reason requires. A great part of this duty may be resolved into that of charity or benevolence, the principal obstacle to which is the gratification of our appetites and passions: but the whole of it is not, as it is necessary to observe, comprized in this duty.

The passions and appetites were many of them given, and in their natural tendency lead us, to promote the good of others; others to secure and increase our own private happiness. The first of these may be safely indulged, care only being taken that no particular affection towards any object interfere with a more general good. In the government of the latter the virtue of such mixed beings as we are principally consists.

They

They are these selfish passions chiefly, which suggest the motives to vice, and seduce us from our duty. These are, first, to be controuled by the great principle above-mentioned. When the general good requires it, they are to be resigned and sacrificed. Even the love of life itself will be intemperate, if indulged to the hurt of others ; and there are certainly many cases in which it is right and duty to resign it.

In this self-command, this power of controuling our passions and appetites by reason, consists the principal part of human virtue. Hence every action that shews this power over ourselves, tho' not in itself virtuous, is looked upon with admiration and applause. Hence the honour paid to courage, intrepidity, &c. Hence too all such voluntary acts of discipline as are intended to gain the mastery over our passions, and to get the habit of self-command, abstinence from lawful pleasures, acts of self-denial and mortification, are strictly virtuous.

But there is another duty of temperance
entirely independent of this first principle;
O which

which is that of directing the passions and appetites of the body to their proper use, and not indulging them beyond the ends for which they were intended. As these were given us chiefly to maintain and preserve the health and activity both of mind and body, to indulge them so far as to impair this health or strength, is plainly contrary to reason and nature. To inflame those passions, which it is the business of reason to controul, to give the reins to appetite, and to deprive ourselves of the use of our reason by intemperance, is to abandon our moral character, and to expose ourselves wilfully to the incursion of all manner of guilt and sin. But, without appealing to these consequences, it is certain that intemperance, in the higher degree of it, drunkenness, prostitution, &c. appear at sight to be criminal and wrong, and to carry moral pollution along with them. And, if every endeavour by discipline and exercise to improve our virtue be itself virtuous, it is certain that every self-indulgence, by which the passions are inflamed, the appetites quickened, or reason impaired, must be in the same degree vicious. The rule of duty then consisting of the three
great

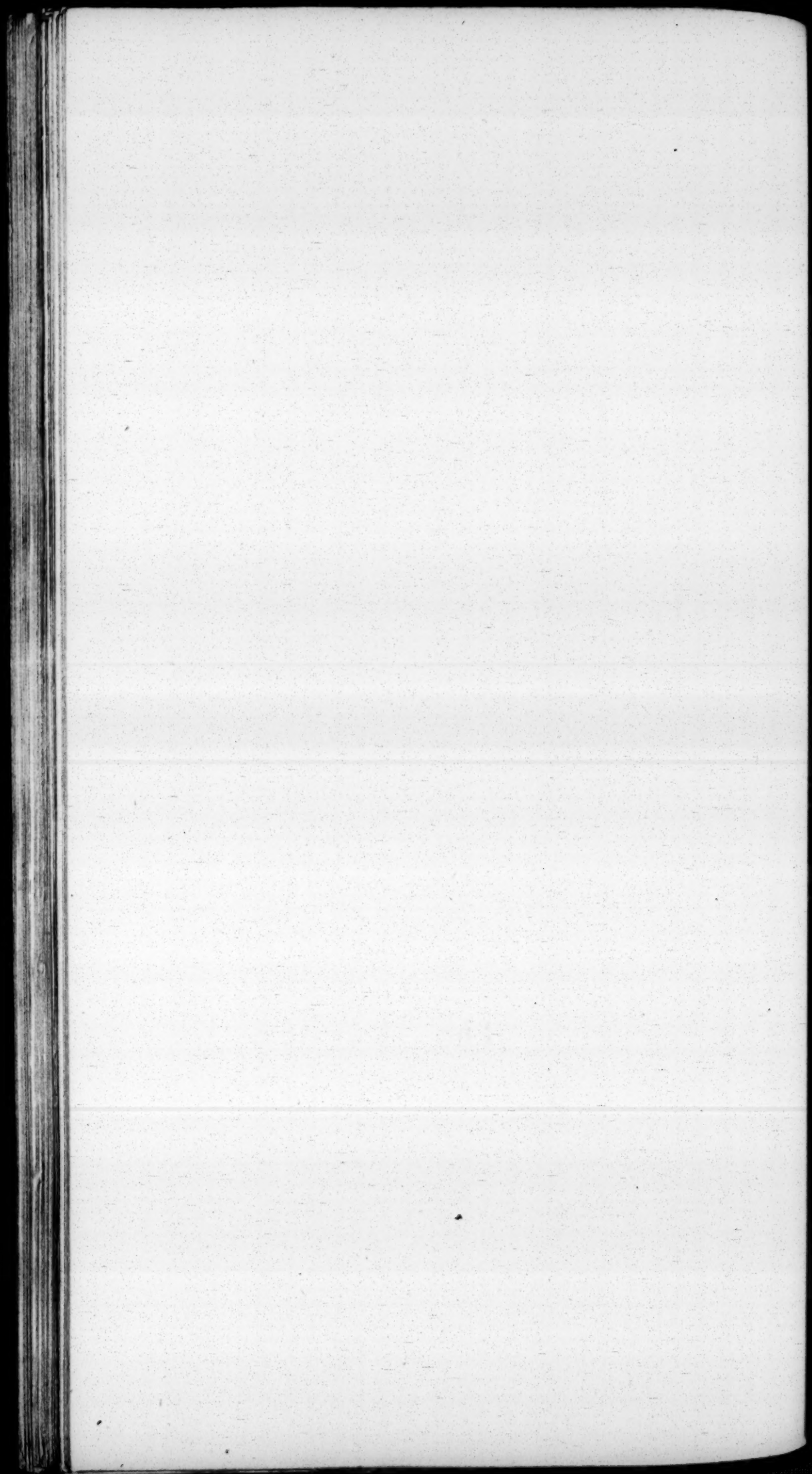
great heads, piety, charity, and temperance, is reducible to a few of the plainest principles, such as are not only easy, but self-evident, and conspicuous to all capacities. Whoever has reason, must have conscience, or a rule by which to judge of his own actions here, and to make him capable of being judged hereafter. Hence ignorance is never allowed an excuse for neglecting or violating the common duties of life. And hence a moral sense has been thought necessary to account for that sudden approbation of virtue, and natural antipathy to vice, by which the mind as readily distinguishes the beauty and deformity of actions, as the eye of the body does external objects.

F A L S E Z E A L

R E P R O V E D.

A SERMON preached at St. CHAD's, SHREWSBURY,

November 5, 1740.



T O
EDWARD TWISS, Esq.
M A Y O R
O F
S H R E W S B U R Y

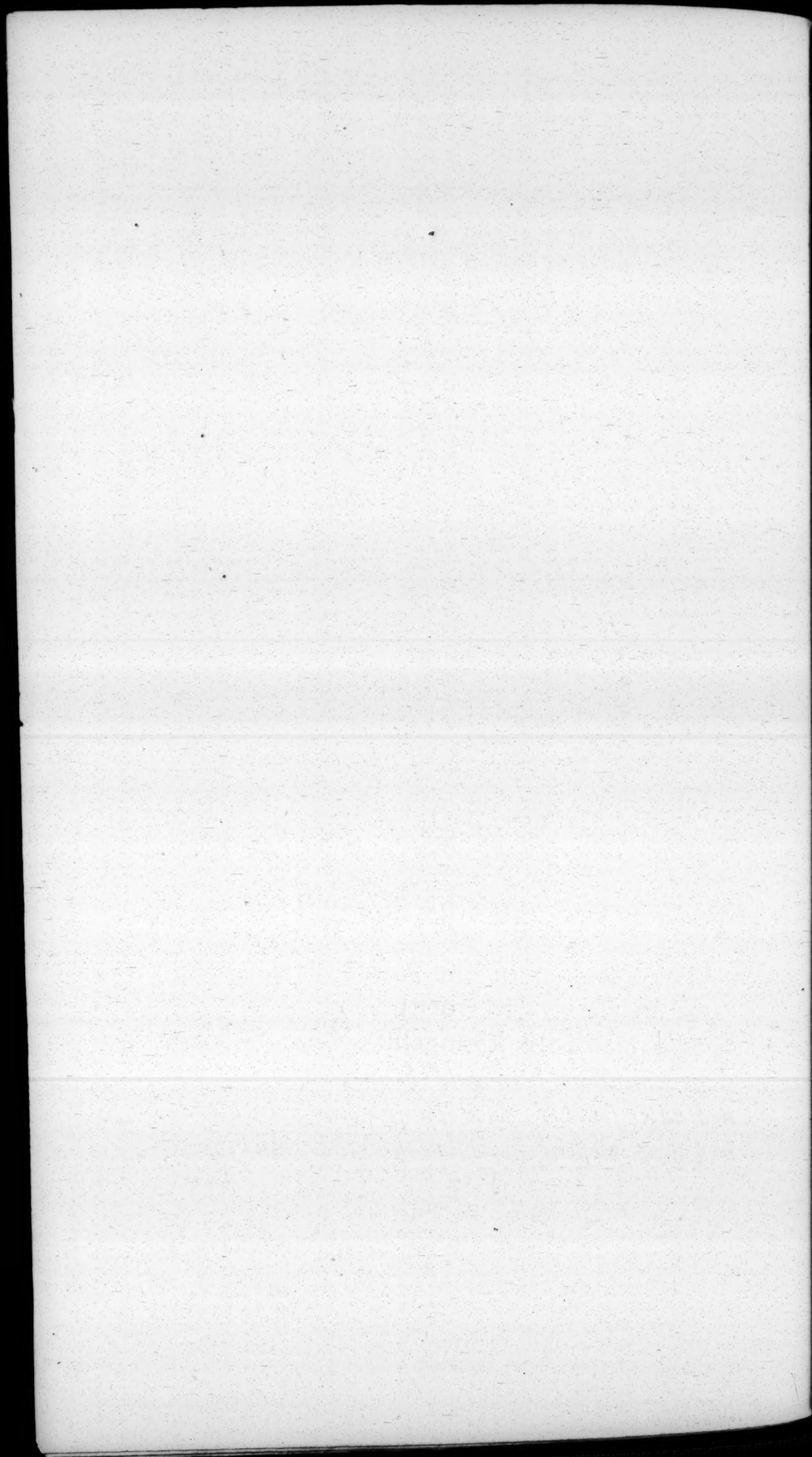
THE FOLLOWING
S E R M O N
IS INSCRIBED,

As A T O K E N

*Of the sincere Esteem
And Affection of*

The AUTHOR.

P 2





LUKE ix. 55, 56.

*He turned, and rebuked them, and said,
Ye know not what manner of spirit ye
are of; The Son of Man is not come
to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*

***N treating upon these words of
* I * our blessed Saviour, it will be
* necessary, first, to explain the
*** occasion which introduced them;
after which I shall lay before you the
several conclusions, which they naturally
offer to our consideration, and endeavour
to apply them to our use and instruction.

The occasion of the words is related at
large in the gospel for the day. — *It came
to pass, (saith the Evangelist) when the time
was come that he should be received up, he
stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,
and sent messengers before his face, and they*

went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. There was a quarrel of a long date betwixt the Jews and Samaritans, on account of certain differences in their religious worship; for the first occasion of which we must go up to the time of Jeroboam, under whom the ten tribes revolted from Judah, and became a distinct kingdom from it. Till this revolt the tribes of Israel went up constantly to pay their worship at Jerusalem, as was indeed strictly required by their law: but now many inconveniences were feared from this practice. Jeroboam said in his heart, (1 Kings xii. 25.) Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David; if this people go up to do sacrifice at the house of the Lord in Jerusalem; then shall the heart of this people turn again to their Lord, even to Rehoboam King of Judah: and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam King of Judah. To prevent these dangerous consequences, this politick prince appointed other places of worship in his own dominions.

Thus

Thus a separation, or schism, was begun in the *Jewish* church. In process of time a temple was built in Mount *Gerezim*, near *Samaria*, in opposition to that of *Jerusalem*, which was held in the same veneration by the *Samaritans*, as that of *Jerusalem* was by the *Jews*. And here a sufficient foundation was laid for mutual hatred and animosity. Men are apt to think the highest degrees of anger and resentment justifiable in the cause of religion: and we find, accordingly, that these differences grew so high, that the *Jews* had no dealings with the *Samaritans*.

This then sufficiently explains the reason why the *Samaritans* would not receive our Saviour. It was because *his Face was as though he would go to Jerusalem*. Our Lord was now going to celebrate the pass-over there, which the *Samaritans* resented as a slight offered to their church; since it was, in effect, deciding the question between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, and declaring that in *Jerusalem* was the place where men ought to worship. *When James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from*
P 4 *heaven,*

heaven, and consume them, as Elias did? Whether this proceeded from pure zeal for their master's honour, or, in part, from that enmity and resentment which they too naturally bore to the *Samaritans*, we need not enquire. But to this incident we owe the excellent lesson of divine instruction in the text: *He turned, and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* The genius of the Christian religion is not thus fierce, and implacable; the spirit which it breathes, is that of love and peace; and the zeal it inspires, active only in doing good.

The first conclusion then which offers itself to us, from the text thus explained, and which is almost expressed in the words themselves, is, that it is an essential part in the character of the Christian religion, to advance the happiness and good of mankind. The only end which can be assigned why God created the world, is, that he might communicate his happiness to his creatures. His infinite goodness, which is so conspicuous in every part of his creation, naturally leads us to this
con-

conclusion. *The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord, and his tender mercies are, visibly, over all his works.* The happiness and welfare of the unintelligent part of the world, is every where provided for by settled laws, and by the natural course of causes and events. And therefore in religion, which is given to man to conduct him to the proper end of his being, we may expect a full provision for the happiness of mankind. Accordingly, there we find every thing that can conduce to the present and future, to the general and particular happiness of man: all it's precepts are directed to promote the publick tranquillity and private peace of every man's mind; and it answers fully that character which it assumes to itself in it's first address to the world, of bringing *peace on earth, and good will to men.*

This regard to the present good of mankind is particularly seen in the duties which it lays down for our behaviour to each other. As man is naturally helpless, and indigent, and unable to subsist without society; therefore religion hath made it a duty in every man to contribute to the happiness, to relieve the wants, and
bear

bear with the infirmities of every other. This duty is enjoined in the utmost latitude, and recommended to us with all the force, that the authority and example of Christ could possibly give it.

This then, we may safely assert, is the distinguishing character of christianity, to promote the happiness of mankind: and consequently, it is the distinguishing character of a true christian to contribute all he can, to the peace and repose, the happiness and tranquillity of the world.

A second remark, which offers itself from the text, is, that no difference of opinion can cancel these obligations of charity, by which religion hath bound us to each other: — in other words, that we are obliged to show all the offices of kindness and good will to others, however they may differ in their religious or other sentiments from us. This is a truth, which, one would think, should not want the authority of scripture to support it. For what can be more unreasonable than to expect that all men should be of the same opinion with ourselves, or to make it a ground of enmity and resentment if they
are

are not ? What can be more unjust than to refuse to others the same liberty of thinking and judging, which we claim to ourselves ? Or, what injury can we pretend is done to us, by men's following their own reason rather than ours ? It is manifestly impossible, in the nature of things, considering the different tempers, inclinations, interests, and prejudices of men, that they should think exactly alike in any point, where there is the least room to differ. Nothing is more common than for men to change their own opinions, and we have all of us at times experienced this inconstancy in ourselves : it is but just therefore that we allow a much greater variety of judgment in other men. Yet such is the pride of human nature, that nothing hath occasioned more fatal quarrels, or produced more bloody effects than this unavoidable difference in sentiment and opinion. Men of all persuasions are apt to set up their own faith as the standard of truth, and, when they have power enough to controul the actions of others, seldom fail to make their authority indisputable : hence religion hath been propagated by fire and the sword, and error hath by the force of such tyrannical

rannical reasons, got a much larger establishment in the world than truth.

Our blessed Lord therefore, who knew the power of this principle in the heart of man, thought it not enough to guard against this spirit by the general precepts of charity, though inculcated in the most extensive sense; but hath farther particularly applied them to this purpose in many parts of scripture. In the history of the traveller who fell among thieves, he hath taught us in the most affectionate and engaging manner: first, how useless and insignificant the profession of the best religion is without charity, in the example of the *Jewish* priest and *Levite*; who seeing one of their own religion naked, and wounded, and half dead, shewed no signs of pity and compassion towards him: and secondly, in the character of the good *Samaritan*; that even in a corrupt religion, where charity hath taken sufficient root, it may produce very excellent fruits: and lastly, by recommending the charitable example of the *Samaritan*, and bidding his followers *go and do likewise*; hath expressly made it a duty in them to do all good offices

offices to those, who differ in their religious persuasions from them.

It is certain that our Saviour did not allow the reasons of this separation, or schism of the *Samaritans*, for he plainly condemned it; not only in his practice, by conforming to the worship of the *Jews*, but in very express and severe terms to the woman of *Samaria*: yet was he so far from authorizing the least degree of resentment towards them, that he seems to have taken every occasion of conversing freely and openly with them. When he was rejected of one city of the *Samaritans*, as we are told immediately after the text, he offered his instructions to another. And, in general, his behaviour to them was so free from reserve and scruple, as to bring upon him, from the *Jews*, the reproachful imputation of being a *Samaritan*.

It may here perhaps deserve our notice, that many excellent men, whose names are honoured in scripture, seem to have lived in this schism. *Hosea*, and other of the prophets were *Samaritans* born: *Elijah*, the greatest of them, prophesied in *Samaria*: and when the *Israelites* under *Ahab* were

were generally sunk into idolatry, God himself declares, of those who continued true to his service, *I have yet left me seven thousand men that have not bowed the knee to Baal*; in which he plainly accepts and acknowledges for his own, those who did not conform in all points of worship to the rules prescribed by the *mosaick* law. Where then is the grace of those men, who take upon them to cut off from the terms of mercy, all such as differ in opinion from themselves?

But I proceed to add, as a third conclusion from the text, that no pretended zeal for the honour of Christ, or the christian cause, will authorize any degree of hatred and ill-will to our fellow-creatures. It will be difficult to find a greater colour for our resentment than the disciples here had against the *Samaritans*. They had (besides the fullest conviction from the miracles of our Saviour) immediately before this, seen the most illustrious attestation to his divine character, in the visible glory which surrounded him on the mount, and the voice from heaven declaring him the beloved Son of God; and were now present witnesses of a great indignity offered

ed to him in his own person; it was therefore but natural for them to resent with indignation the wrong and dishonour done him. Yet our Lord severely reprov'd and forbad every degree of this spirit in them.

In most of the disputes which divide the christian church, the honour of God and the truth of his religion are but little concerned. All parties are alike agreed in paying him the highest honours they can, though they differ as to the manner of doing it. But because men are so fondly partial to their own opinions, as generally to think the interest of religion connected with them, it is therefore necessary to convince them, that a zeal for God is, upon christian principles, inseparable from the love of our neighbour; according to that of the apostle, *He that loveth God let him love his brother also*: and again, *If a man say that he love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar*.

The last conclusion which offers itself from the text is, that a want of charity in others will not exempt us from the duties of charity to them. The inhospitable
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treatment of the *Samaritans* was not allowed by our Lord as a just cause of anger in his disciples. It is one glorious singularity in his religion, that it extends our charity even to the worst of our enemies. *If ye love them, saith he, that love you, what thank have ye? for do not even the publicans the same? But I say unto you, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

These conclusions, which naturally arise from the text, will be of great use, as I come in the next place to shew, both to inform our judgment, and direct our practice.

First, as a rule to form our judgment by: They are a ready test whereby we may judge of the truth of such religious doctrines as relate to our behaviour in society. If charity and good-will to men be essential to the character of true religion, then all such doctrines as violate the rules of charity, invert the order of government, or disturb the peace of society, must be false and unchristian. If no difference of opinion can absolve us from
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the obligations of charity to each other; if no zeal for the honour of God's laws can justify malice and cruelty; then it is certain that every degree of persecution in matters of religion is contrary to the spirit of Christ. In these cases there needs no long enquiry; we want not the help of an infallible judge to determine for us, but may safely pronounce, upon the principles implied in the text, that all such doctrines are false. This is agreeable to the rule, which our Saviour hath laid down for our direction, in the like case, in another part of scripture, *By their fruits ye shall know them.*

Secondly; If under this head we apply these principles to the proper subject of the day; if every degree of malice and cruelty, if the lowest degree of persecution be unlawful and unchristian, we see then what manner of spirit that church is of, which hath openly renounced all charity for those who differ from her, and, without waiting for fire from heaven, commits at once to the flames as many as do not give up their reason and liberty, and submit blindfold to her authority. It is the known and avowed principle of the romish

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church,

church, that faith is not to be kept, no measures of justice or humanity to be observed, with those whom she esteems heretics. Upon this principle princes have been deposed, subjects absolved from their allegiance, and the right of kingdoms transferred at the pleasure of the pope only: upon this principle, murders, assassinations and massacres have been justified, applauded, consecrated, canonized: upon this principle, whole kingdoms have been excommunicated, and delivered up by solemn anathemas, to the torments of the other world: upon this principle, many thousands of protestants have been massacred in cold blood; many hundred thousands have been banished from their country; and great numbers are still shut up in dungeons, groaning under the horrors of an inquisition more cruel than death itself: lastly, to name no more; upon this principle, was built the treason of this day; and an attempt by which a whole nation was devoted to destruction; an attempt which comprehended in it more treachery, cruelty, and complicated villainy of every kind, than ever the wit of man had yet brought into the same compass; was carried on with all the confidence

dence and cool assurance of innocency and a good cause : and in which, it is certain, the intended actors were so far deluded, as to think it a design not only innocent, but sacred and meritorious. Certainly to avow such principles as these, is no less than an absolute apostacy from the spirit and religion of Christ ; but to pretend to derive them from his gospel, to make a religion so divinely beneficent as the christian, a colour for such barbarities, is a strain of such exquisite hypocrisy, such transcendent impiety, as no language can equal or express. But I shall add no more under this head, than just to observe the reasons which it naturally suggests to us, for our thus publicly acknowledging the blessings we enjoy, in having our religion delivered from the principles, and our persons from the power of this corrupt church. As to the first, it is a blessing which we should now especially commemorate in our thanksgivings, to have a religion reformed from the abuses of popery, to have the use of the scriptures freely indulged us, and the doctrines of them taught in their original simplicity. And we ought always to honour the names of those excellent men, to whose labours we owe this in-
 valuable

luable blessing; and who at the hazard, and many of them at the expence of their lives procured it to us. As to the latter, the many signal deliverances which we have had from the restless attempts of our enemies claim from us the devoutest acknowledgments of our thanks and praise. If we consider the unwearied vigilance, and that height of cruelty which have appeared in our enemies, and, above all, that power of mischief, which the corrupt principles we have been considering, put into their hands; we shall find reason to think the eye of providence hath been watchful over us; and that it is of the Lord's mercy we are not consumed. The religion of our adversaries is a weapon in their hands, which no human power or wisdom can withstand. There is no protection against a principle which can authorize assassinations and plots, which can licence treachery, falsehood, and every breach of faith. We must fly to heaven for succour against such secret dangers, and ascribe it to the good providence of God that we have so often escaped them. And here, likewise, we must pay due honour to the memory of those, who have been instruments in the hand of God, in procuring these blessings
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to us ; especially of that great deliverer, to whose assistance we not only owe the rescue of these kingdoms from popish tyranny, and arbitrary power ; but to his government likewise, an establishment of liberty, and many publick blessings beyond what they had ever before enjoyed.

Again, These principles when applied to our practice, are the best rules to direct us in our behaviour to those who differ in religion from us. And first, with respect to those of the romish church. If a want of charity in others will not exempt us from the duties of charity to them, we ought still to be ready to do them all the good offices which are due to our christian brethren. However we may detest the principles of that corrupt church, we should yet retain our charity for the members of it ; and many of these, it is charitable to believe, do in their hearts secretly condemn these principles, at least have too much virtue to be corrupted by them. It would be a very ill use of these publick commemorations, to keep up a spirit of enmity and resentment in our minds, and we shall with a very ill grace condemn the extravagant zeal of others, if at the same time

time we suffer the like unjustifiable zeal in ourselves. Let us shew that we are indeed reformed from the errors of that church, by renouncing the practice as well as the doctrines of it; particularly by rooting out every degree of the persecuting spirit in ourselves. And let it always be the glory of our church, in her practice, to reprove the morals, as in her writings she hath confuted the doctrines of *Rome*.

But, secondly, If we are to preserve this charity to those whose religious principles are so extremely corrupt, and so dangerous to our own safety, we ought certainly to extend a larger share of our good-will to those who have never deserved ill at our hands; whose principles at least are no way injurious to us; and who most of them differ from us in matters of little or no moment. With respect to these we ought to live in perfect friendship and amity together. So the apostle hath expressly taught us in the case of a like difference betwixt the *Jewish* and *Gentile* converts; where he enjoins those who were strong in the faith to bear with the infirmities

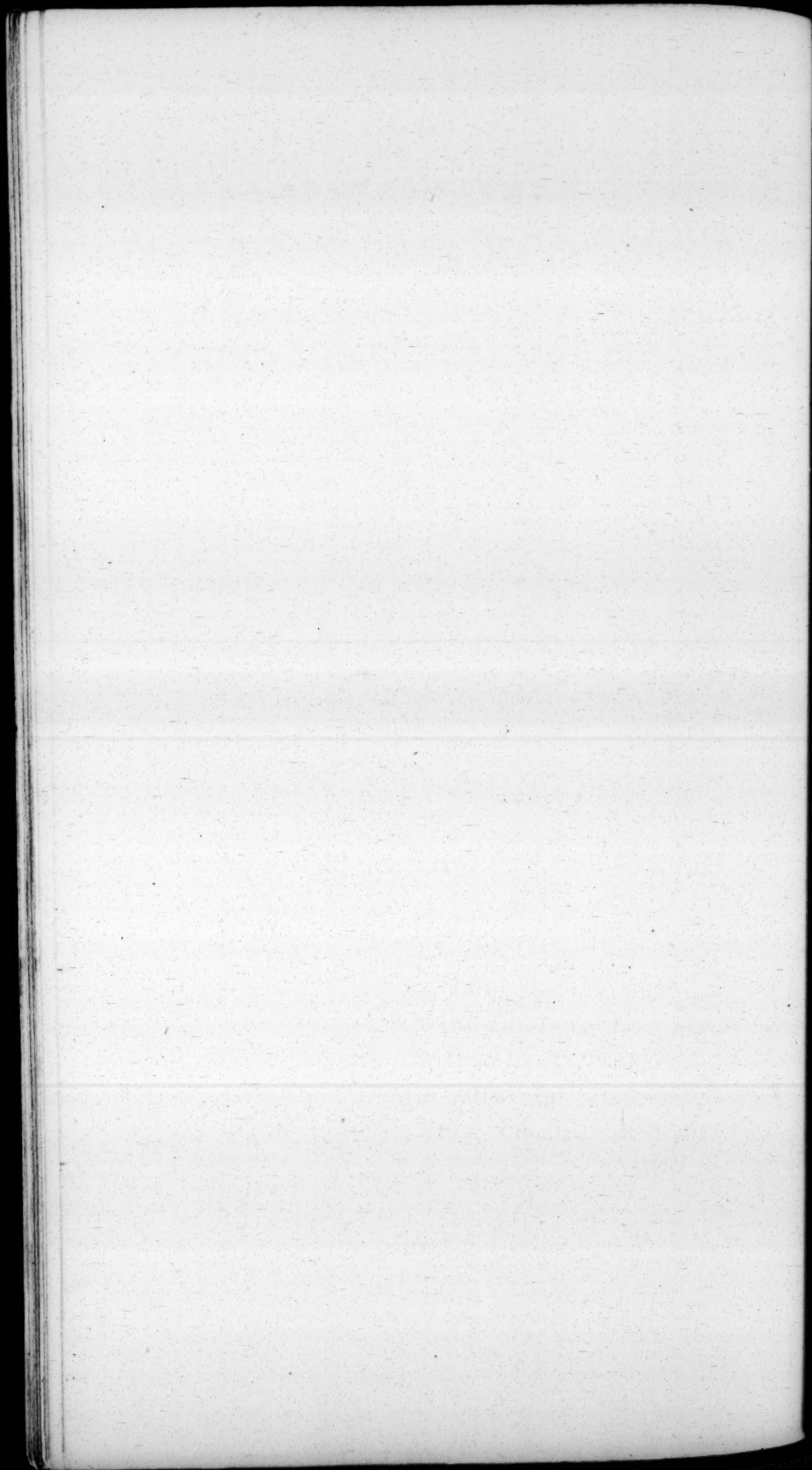
mities of the weak ; and though he plainly determines in favour of the one, yet he tells them, both parties might safely enjoy their opinions, and yet unite in the same worship together. *Receive ye one another,* saith he, without contending about such matters in which your judgment differs : *that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God* — that thus receiving each other into communion, ye may unite in the same worship, to the glory of God.

I need not observe, that what hath been said of religious differences will hold, with at least equal weight, with respect to any difference of opinion in civil matters : and that it is equally unchristian to attempt, whether upon civil or religious grounds, to divide us into *Jews* and *Samaritans*, and to separate us in our dealings one from another. We must learn to make allowances for the passions and prejudices of each other, and, if we cannot be of one mind, yet to live in peace, *and then the God of love and peace will be with us.*

ON THE
LOVE OF OUR COUNTRY;
A FAST SERMON.

Preached at St. CHAD's, SHREWSBURY, Nov. 10, 1742.

On Occasion of the WAR with SPAIN.





PSALM cxxii. 6, 7.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee; peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.

HE words are an affectionate
T exhortation of King *David* to
his subjects and countrymen to
shew their zeal for their mother city, *Jerusalem*, by offering up their prayers to God for her welfare and prosperity. In the performance of this duty, he not only leads them by his example, but hath in the words of the text put a song of blessing and prayer in their mouths; and expresses his own good wishes to his country in a strain of so much life and beauty, as must almost naturally raise the like publick concern and affection in others.

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We are at present met, as fellow-citizens and countrymen, to pay the same duties to our mother country, our *Jerusalem*; and have the like royal example and admonition to encourage us in it.

I cannot therefore tell where better to direct your thoughts upon this occasion, than to the words of the text; from whence I shall endeavour,

First, To recommend to you that public affection or love to our country, which is so agreeably expressed in them; And

Secondly, To shew particularly what are the present duties, to which this love of our country calls us, and which the piety and wisdom of our governors have appointed this solemnity to remind us of.

The love of our country is a principle, which hath been more celebrated in all ages, hath been the subject of more praise, and panegyrick, than any other affection in the whole train of virtue. It hath been the constant theme of poets, orators and historians.

historians. Statues and coins have been erected and struck, and all the treasures of art and wit perpetually exhausted, in doing honour to those, who have excelled in this character. And indeed the name of patriot implies in it's true sense every thing, that is most great and godlike among men : it carries in it the idea of a publick blessing ; it implies a power of doing good, exerted and extended to whole communities ; and resembles within it's sphere, that universal Providence, which protects and supports the world. But if we enquire more closely into the actions of those, who have been most flattered under this title, we shall find, that nothing hath been more frequently mistaken, than the nature of this virtue ; that most of the appearances of it have been nothing else but ambition, a love of dominion and tyranny ; and that many of those, who have been most honoured as benefactors to their country, have only contributed to it's greatness or power, by invading the rights of their neighbouring nations ; carrying war and desolation into distant countries, and enslaving and oppressing as many, as they could conquer. Among the Romans, where this passion prevailed most, and was

held in the highest honour, it was a national principle to conquer and subdue as many countries, as they could. But if we now compare these principles with that charity, which christianity hath set up as the measure and standard of virtue, or indeed with the common principles of justice and humanity, we shall find that nothing can be more contrary to the nature of true virtue; that no love of our country can justify oppression and cruelty; and that, where this passion leads men to the ruin of whole cities and countries without any just cause, instead of entitling them to honour, as benefactors to their country, it ought to render them the objects of publick horror and aversion, as the common enemies of mankind.

It will therefore perhaps be worth our while to consider more distinctly the nature of this virtue, and to enquire in what the merit of it consists, and what are the duties implied in it.

By our country, when we consider it as the object of our affection, is certainly meant that body of men, who are united with us in one community, under the same laws

laws and government, and in a league of mutual defence and support. And, as the end of this union in all government is the common interest and good of the whole, a love of our country implies in it, First, a steady regard to this common or publick interest. And secondarily, to those laws of union, that form of polity or constitution, which are fixed upon as the best means for promoting this end. This publick affection is in some degree natural to the mind of man: and to see what there is of virtue in it, we must consider the several principles upon which it is commonly built.

And first, That social principle, which God hath implanted in us, and which makes us delight in a mutual intercourse with each other, naturally leads us to love those, with whom we converse. A similitude of life and manners, an agreement in customs, opinions and language, and (which is the case in some particulars of all those, who are united in society) an agreement in the same common interest; all these are a natural foundation for love and affection. They work mechanically on the mind; and consequently, as far as

these are concerned in raising our publick affections, there is no virtue or merit in them : they are the fruits of self-love, and are common to the worst of men, as well as the best.

Secondly, another natural foundation for this love of our country are the several alliances of friendship and natural relation, by which the members of the same community are always united together. The natural affections, which bind together those of the same kindred and family,

————— *The charities*
Of father, son, and brother, —

as our excellent *Milton* calls them ; all conspire to promote and strengthen this publick principle in us ; like so many streams, that encrease and swell the channel, which receives them. This is mentioned by our royal author himself, as a motive of endearment to his country, in the verse which follows the text : *For my brethren and companions sake I will wish thee prosperity.* Here this affection begins to appear amiable ; it is founded upon a
 virtuous

virtuous principle, and will be found to rise highest upon these motives in the best and most ingenuous tempers. Yet these are passions natural to the mind of man; self-love hath a great share in them; and consequently to be so far influenced with a love of our country, argues but a low degree of virtue. It is certain too, that these may sometimes give the mind a quite contrary direction, and strongly incline us to the prejudice of our country. There are many instances, in which the interest of our dearest friend or relation ought to be sacrificed to the publick good. We must therefore look for some farther and steadier principle to build this duty upon.

A third principle then, upon which the love of our country may be rationally founded, is the protection, which it gives us in our just rights and liberties. This indeed, as far as our own interest is concerned in it, is a private or selfish principle, and hath nothing of that publick spirit, which we are enquiring after. But if we consider it not as a narrow concern for our own interests, but for the natural rights in common of all our fellow-citizens
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and countrymen; if we are ready to defend their lives and properties at the hazard of our own; if we are ready to oppose ourselves the foremost against the invasions of foreign, or the usurpations of domestick tyranny; this is plainly virtue of the highest and most disinterested kind. A love of our country is in these instances a love of justice, a love of charity, a desire to contribute to the welfare and happiness of all about us, and to protect them from wrong and oppression.

Here then is the foundation of that virtue, which is so deservedly applauded in this character. It consists in a generous regard to the common happiness and welfare of mankind, exemplified particularly in the society or community, in which we live; which is certainly the noblest cause, in which the heart of man can be engaged, and in which he, who deserves the name of patriot, must think his fortune and life well lost.

A love of our country then, where this passion hath such an object, as it can perfectly acquiesce in, implies in it a love of the laws and constitution, by which it

is governed : and that government has the best right to our affection and service, in which the common rights of mankind are best secured, and protected to us. Here then let us apply this observation to our own use and instruction.

There never was perhaps a country or government in the world, where the natural liberties and enjoyments of mankind were more effectually secured to all the members of it than that, under which we live. It is our happiness not to be governed by the arbitrary will of an absolute monarch, but by laws of our own making ; to have the administration of these laws in the hands of a prince, who owns himself their subject, and who never has in any one instance assumed a power of altering, repealing or suspending the force of them ; which, as it is a happiness unknown to most other countries, so, however it was claimed as the right of *Englishmen*, was yet never experienced in fact among them, till that happy revolution, which freed us at once from the apprehensions of popery, and it's inseparable attendant, arbitrary power.

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And this leads me to mention another blessing of the highest value to our country, and that is the free profession of the purest religion in the world: the interest of which is inseparably connected with that constitution and government, by which it is protected and established. They have both the same common enemies, and must stand or fall together. This therefore is another consideration, which ought greatly to endear our country to us; and which the royal Psalmist likewise mentions, as a ground of his pious affection to *Jerusalem*: *Yea, because of the House of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.* Upon the whole, we have in the security of our civil and religious rights every publick advantage in the highest perfection, that any nation can boast of; and consequently, if the love of our country be in any circumstances a duty, it is in an extraordinary manner binding upon us; and it is with great reason, that this generous principle has hitherto so eminently prevailed, and will, I hope, always prevail amongst us.

What are the proper expressions of this affection, or the duties implied in this character, may be easily collected from
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what has been said. They are, in our several stations to promote the common interest of our country ; to be obedient to the government we are under ; and to serve diligently the offices assigned us in it. It must be left to those, who are distinguished by a publick character, and who are blessed with talents and abilities, equal to the charges they sustain, to shine as patriots to their country ; to protect it by their councils, and defend it by their courage. But it is the duty of every common subject to submit peaceably to the laws of that government he is under, and that not only for wrath, or a fear of punishment, but for conscience sake : it is his duty to strengthen the hands of the government ; to remove every impediment out of it's way ; and not to weaken it by spreading faction and discontent among the people ; and, lastly, to contribute chearfully his proportion of those supplies, which the exigencies of the state may make it necessary to demand.

The particular duties, to which the love of our country at present calls us, and which I was in the last place to consider, are those of humbling ourselves under a sense of those sins, which may have provoked

voked God to withdraw his mercy from us ; and imploring the assistance and blessing of heaven on his majesty's arms ; which have been taken up, not upon a vain principle of ambition, to gratify the resentment of an angry, or the pride of an aspiring monarch ; but in defence of the plainest rights, and such as all mankind have ever claimed, at the call of a provoked and long-injured people ; and after every other method of redress had been tried in vain. But though from the goodness of our cause, as well as the wisdom of our councils and the strength of our fleets and armies, we have the most reasonable hope of success ; yet it is a truth, which reason and experience, as well as religion, teach us, that *the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong* : * that the event of all things is in the hands of God ; and more especially, that the fate of nations is weighed and determined by him. If therefore in the common occurrences of life it is our wisdom and interest, as well as our piety, to look up to heaven for a blessing on our labours and endeavours ; it is certainly a
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* Ecclesiastes ix. 11.

far more indispenfible duty in us on occafions of fo great importance. A prefumptuous confidence in our own ftrength might itfelf juftly provoke God to give us up into the hands of our enemies; and on the other hand, a pious trust in his mercy may be a powerful means to draw down his bleffing and affiftance in our favour. Thus *the children of Ifrael were brought down, fays the fcripture, in that day, and the children of Judah prevailed, becaufe they relied on the Lord their God.** Let us then not build too much upon human profpects; or fhut God out of our councils and defigns; but let us flee humbly to him for fuccour in a pious acknowledgment, that without him *nothing is ftrong; that without him no king can be faved by the multitude of an hoft; nor the mightieft man be delivered by his ftrength.†* A neighbouring prince hath lately chofen, with great folemnity the Virgin *Mary* for the patronefs and guardian of his dominions; ‡
and

* 2 Chron. xiii. 18.

† Pfalm xxxiii. 16.

‡ For the reader's information, I have here tranflated the French King's injunctions upon this head, which are contained in a letter to the archbifhop of Paris, bearing date, Auguft 1738.

— “ Among

and published his royal will in a very extraordinary form, that all his subjects should address their vows and prayers to her

— “ Among all the establishments, formed by the piety
 “ of my ancestors, there is none more to be regarded than
 “ the solemn vow of *Lewis XIII.* of glorious memory.
 “ This prince, filled with the truest sentiments of piety,
 “ had so often experienced the visible succours of heaven,
 “ both when his kingdom was disturbed by the troubles,
 “ which heresy always brings along with it, and in the
 “ wars, which the jealousy of his neighbours stirred up;
 “ that he thought he could not give a more authentick
 “ testimony of his devout acknowledgment, and his veneration
 “ for the most holy Virgin, than by putting his
 “ kingdom under her protection.”

“ *Lewis* the XIV. of glorious memory, my most honoured
 “ lord and great grandfather, acted upon the same
 “ principles; and received, during the whole course of
 “ his reign, signal effects of this protection. And as I
 “ cannot follow greater examples than these of my two
 “ august predecessors, I will, that this year, which compleats
 “ one hundred years since my kingdom has acknowledged
 “ the Mother of God for it's special patroness,
 “ shall give date to this my renewal of the same establishment.
 “ To this end I write to acquaint you, that my
 “ intention is, that on the morning of the *Sunday* preceding
 “ the 15th of *August*, the day of the assumption of
 “ the most holy Virgin, you cause to be published the declaration
 “ of *Lewis XIII.* of the 10th of *February*, 1638,
 “ in the metropolitan church of my good city of *Paris*,
 “ and others of your diocese; and that after vespers on
 “ the day of assumption, there shall be a procession with
 “ all possible splendour, attended with the usual ceremonies
 “ observed in general processions of the most solemn
 “ form

ourselves in the sight of God, under a sense of our sins, lest they should provoke him to withdraw his mercy from us.

It was given in especial charge to the people of *Israel*, and made a part of their law, that, when the host went forth against the enemy, then they should keep themselves from every wicked thing.* If they expected God should declare for them in the day of war, they were to sanctify themselves to the Lord, and to put away all evil from among them. And a like religious rule was very generally observed among the heathen; they had certain purifyings and lustrations always performed by their whole armies, before they led them to battle. It was thought necessary before the determination of so great events, on which the fate of nations is usually suspended, to avert the displeasure, and deprecate the anger of heaven, by a more than ordinary solemnity of religious worship. For the same pious reasons we are called upon in the duty of this day, together with our devotions, to enter upon a reformation of life and manners, in order
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* Deut. xxiii. 9.

to procure the favour of heaven to our cause. In vain we offer up our prayers to God, if we continue in a state of disobedience to his laws. If we expect the blessing of heaven to attend us, we must endeavour to procure it. If we would make God our friend, we must forsake those sins, which set us at enmity with him.

A life of holiness and virtue is at all times necessary to recommend our prayers to God; but nothing less than a national virtue is sufficient to secure those general and extensive blessings of his providence, which he hath promised to a righteous nation. The scriptures are very full in declaring, and the history of the *Jewish* nation is a continual witness of it, that the dispensations of God towards publick bodies and communities of men are always adjusted and determined by the good, or evil, that prevails among them. *At what instant he speaks concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom he hath pronounced, turn from their evil way, he will repent of the evil, that he thought to do unto them. And at what instant he speaks concerning a nation,*

and concerning a kingdom, to build, and to plant it; if it do evil in his sight, and obey not his voice, then he will repent of the good, wherewith he said he would benefit them. He createth peace, and maketh war. He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein; and on the other hand, in favour of an obedient people, He maketh the wilderness a standing water, and water springs of a dry ground. †*

Let us then take this occasion to reflect on the present state of virtue and religion among us. It is, I am afraid, such as can give us no just confidence in the favour of God. The purity of our faith and worship does indeed very much excel that of our enemies; but we cannot suppose the worst of our enemies to live worse than a great part of us do. The principles of religion were perhaps never more rationally explained, or more justly directed to their true end and aim, the promoting of piety and virtue in the world, than they generally are among us: that venerable simplicity, which recommended christiani-
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* Jer. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10.

† Psalm cvii. 34, 35.

ty at it's first appearance, seems almost revived in the doctrines and rituals of our church. But can it be said, that religion hath gained in the same proportion in the esteem and reverence of those, who are taught it in this purity? On the contrary, Is it not true, that, as we have rectified our faith and opinions, we have sunk in our piety and morals? Is not the worship of God here most neglected, where it is most free from error and superstition? Is not indeed a want of religion and principle the distinguishing character of the times and country we live in? Are not the forms of piety and restraints of temperance openly scorned and derided by many among us? And are not those sins, which are forbid to be once named among christians, committed without shame or fear, and even with boasting and triumph? Certainly if this is our case, we ought seriously to attend to the great danger we are in; to consider how we may avert the judgments of God, which threaten us; and recall that spirit of piety and virtue, which alone can save us.

Great indeed and difficult is the undertaking to reform a corrupt age, but we
should

should therefore apply ourselves to the work with a diligence, suitable to the importance and necessity of it : let those who are in authority shew their zeal in executing the laws for that purpose ; in suppressing the publick and known temptations to lewdness and debauchery ; and in punishing that prophaneness, which triumphs openly in our streets. Let those, whose rank and character give weight to their example, shew their sense of religion by a constant attendance upon the offices of it, and by a strict sobriety of life and manners ; that so others may be won by their conversation to think on the evil of their ways. Let us every one contribute his endeavour to reduce and lessen the weight of publick guilt, by at least reforming and amending himself, and unite in our prayers, and in every good work, that *God may be intreated for the land.* * So may we yet piously hope, that God will *go forth with our armies,* † *and command deliverances for Jacob ;* ‡ *that through him we shall push down our enemies, and keep them under that rise up against us.* § So shall we not

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 25.

† Psalm xliv. 9.

‡ Psalm xliv. 4.

§ Psalm cviii. 13.

not only consult the peace and prosperity of this our *Jerusalem*, but shall provide in the best manner for our future peace and happiness in a better country, shall be received as true sons and citizens of that *Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all.* *

Let this then be thought to deserve our whole attention, in which both our present and everlasting interest are concerned. Let it be our great endeavour to procure the favour of God to ourselves, and, as far as our prayers and personal obedience can prevail, to our country. And may we all so live, united by the bonds of piety and charity here, as to be admitted hereafter into *the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem*, there to live for ever in the happy rank and character of fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. †

* Gal. iv. 26.

† Eph. ii. 19.

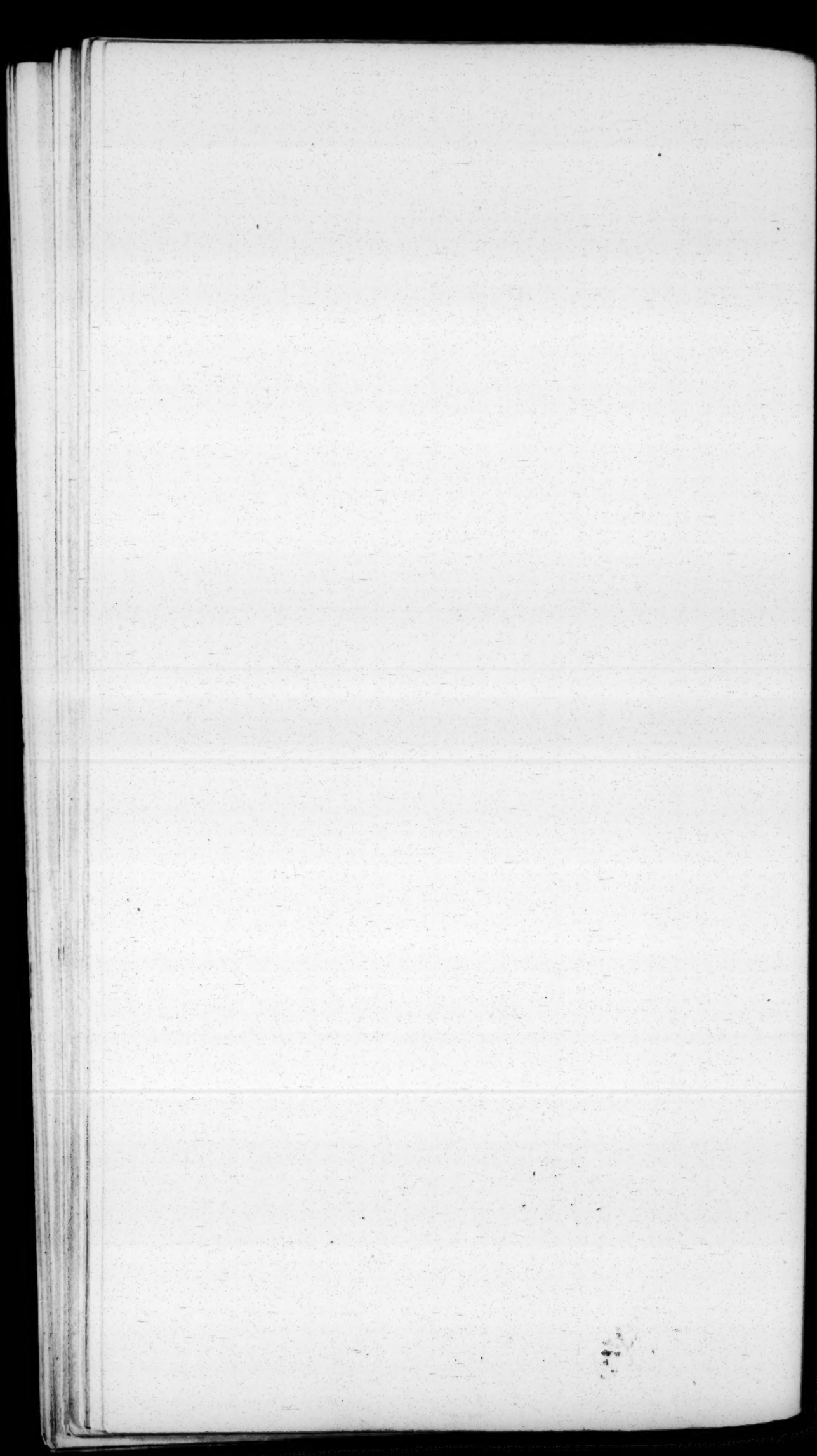
T H E E N D.

P E R S E V E R A N C E

I N

W E L L - D O I N G .

A SERMON preached at St. CHAD's, SHREWSBURY,
Before the TRUSTEES of the SALOP INFIRMARY,
September 14, 1749.



TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
HENRY-ARTHUR, Earl of *POWIS*,
TREASURER,
And the Rest of the
TRUSTEES
OF THE
SALOP INFIRMARY,
THE FOLLOWING
SERMON

Is humbly Inscribed,

By the AUTHOR.



GALATIANS vi. 9.

Let us not be weary in well-doing.

Y well doing may be understood
B every species of right action,
every thing that belongs, as a
duty, to men or christians. But
it is plain that the apostle in this place
means, principally, acts of charity and be-
neficence ; in which duties he tacitly com-
mends the *Galatians* for the progress they
had already made, and exhorts them to a
farther proficiency.

To be uniformly good, to consider our-
selves as destined in this life to promote
the happiness of all around us, and to
make this steadily and invariably the rule
of our actions ; this, as it is the true
christian character, so is it surely the most
noble and god-like that can be ascribed to
man.

man. We cannot contemplate it without love and delight ; and this will as naturally excite our emulation, and lead us to desire in ourselves what we necessarily admire in others. But this perfect character is not to be attained by a transient wish, by the bare inclination and consent of the mind : it must be formed, like other virtuous habits, by time and patience, exercise and application. Every virtue has it's difficulties, it's field of trial and conflict ; and charity, like the rest, unless formed with care, and disciplined into constancy and perseverance, will be apt to faint and *be weary* under the discouragements which it will often meet with. The motives to this duty have been so frequently and so well displayed, on this and other like occasions, that I shall chuse, as a subject less anticipated, to consider the difficulties that attend it, and the reasons that prevail against these motives. When we go to war, our Saviour hath told us, that we must count not only our own strength, but likewise the strength of the enemy ; that we may be able to meet him that cometh against us. But as these difficulties often arise from our own corrupt passions,

fions, as well as those of other men, it will be proper,

First, To consider distinctly what disposition of mind is necessary to constitute the character in the text; what this virtue is in it's principle as well as in it's effects; that we may learn where our own strength and weakness lies, and how to cultivate and improve this virtuous habit in the mind.

I shall then, *Secondly*, lay before you some of the principal discouragements that seem to check the progress of this virtue in the world; that we may arm ourselves and unite our endeavours against them:

And, through the whole, shall have respect chiefly to the exercise of our charity, in such publick works as this which we are at present met to promote.

And *First*, By the virtue of charity in general is meant universal benevolence; extending it's good wishes to the whole human kind, it's good offices as far as it's abilities

abilities will reach. But more particularly, as it is characterized in the text, it implies a firm resolution to do all the good we can, together with activity and perseverance in doing it. By resolution I here mean a rational determination founded on sure and certain principles, such as are those of reason and religion. A general disposition to do good, it will cost us little pains to form in ourselves. Whoever asks his own heart the question, will be told that his affections are kind and benevolent, and that his sentiments are those of love and charity towards mankind. Every one either feels or fancies this disposition in himself. And it is certain that, in some degree, this temper of mind is natural, and therefore common to all men. God, who hath made the welfare of mankind to depend much on their mutual love and care one for another, hath at the same time, lest reason and religion should have too cold an influence, implanted very powerful passions in the breast to stimulate and excite to these duties. We are so made as necessarily to commiserate the wants and feel the distresses of others. But if our mercy and compassion have no other foundation than this; tho' the world may be
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the better for it, we shall be none the better ourselves. If we relieve others only to gratify ourselves, there is no virtue or merit in this appearance of charity. If we do good only from temper and inclination, from selfish or other human considerations, these principles are very various in their influence and tendency; and, if some of them, at times, prompt us to what is generous and good, others will prevail in their turn, and more frequently seduce us from it.

To give stability to virtue, it must be founded on better motives, on the principles of reason and truth: these are every where the same, and operate in all circumstances alike; they will not bend to our corrupt inclinations, or be moved by the intreaties and importunities of self-love. This then is the proper foundation, the rock on which our virtue must be built. Whatever claims the authority of duty over us must be tried by our reason, not by our passions and inclinations; and where this authority is acknowledged, we must be subject not for pleasure, profit, or fame, but for conscience sake.

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This rational choice, this subjection of the mind to duty, is necessary not only to support but to constitute virtue. Without it our best actions will be nothing worth; it being a first principle in morality, that the virtue of every action is to be estimated from the principle and intention with which it is performed. In the virtue before us the apostle plainly supposes, that we may give all our goods to feed the poor, and yet want charity: and, on the other hand, our blessed Saviour hath declared, that whoso shall give a cup of cold water only to a disciple, *for his sake*, shall not lose his reward.

The resolution then we are recommending, implies a previous examination of the duty to which we are called, a full conviction of the authority and obligation of it; in the present case a sense of the excellence, importance, and necessity of charity: and where this is deeply rooted in the mind, where the motives to well-doing are made familiar and habitual, are always open to our view and ready for action; this is the virtue we are enquiring for in
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the seed and principle, and as it resides in the heart.

The nature and extent of this duty I have supposed sufficiently known, and the motives to it to be obvious to every one's reflexion. I shall therefore conclude this head with observing, that we ought to give some of our time to the study of this and every other virtue; to consider the reasons and motives that induce to them, and the means of cultivating them in ourselves. This is the worthiest and best, as well as the most useful employment in which the mind can be engaged: a neglect of it is the great error in human life. Men are apt, when they have scarce bestowed a thought upon these subjects, to think themselves enough principled in virtue, enough resolved and fortified against vice; and so commit their bark to the wind, and follow where the tide of custom, or the stream of inclination, leads them: and what wonder is it if they make shipwreck of all their hopes?

But, secondly, This resolution, and every virtuous principle, must be tried by its effects; agreeably to the rule of our blessed Saviour,

Saviour, *By their fruits ye shall know them.* The first of these which I mentioned was activity, or an active temper in doing good. To be unwearied in well-doing implies this, and something more; it implies that we have been busy and industrious in all the offices of charity, and that we are still carrying on this labour of love with fresh vigour and alacrity. The best resolutions will not make us on a sudden virtuous or charitable. We must not mistake the design for the thing itself. These resolutions must be pursued into their proper consequences, and set the active powers of the mind at work, before we can take this character to ourselves. Here then it is to be feared that men often deceive themselves: a love of virtue will, at times, warm the breast of the most sluggish into some feeble resolutions of well-doing. In these they applaud themselves; and when they find the generous sentiments of pity and humanity move within them, are easily persuaded that they are merciful and compassionate. Thus we purchase very cheaply our own good opinion, and often think ourselves charitable when we only have bowels.

But

But would we know our true moral character, we must enquire of our actions, not of our sentiments and opinions. These latter are always on the side of truth and virtue. God hath made them so. Our actions only are properly our own, and tell what we are. *I will shew thee my faith by my works*, saith the apostle. If you have charity, shew it by your works. You feel it in yourself, but let others feel it. What families or what persons have been the better for your bounty? Have your ears and your hands been open to the wants of your suffering neighbours? Is your labour or your fortune, in any good degree, spent in their service? When any good work hath invited our concurrence, have we, according to our ability, encouraged and promoted it? Or have we contented ourselves with bidding it *God speed, and wishing it good luck in the name of the Lord?* It is thus we must bring our virtue in this and every other instance to the trial, before we can determine what our real character is. But farther,

A third, and that a principal condition implied, or rather distinctly marked in the
character

character of the text, is perseverance in well-doing. This is necessary in every virtue, to crown and compleat the character; and indeed the only proof we can give of those principles which I mentioned as necessary to recommend our services to God. It will be to no purpose to *endure for a while* in the practice of virtue, if in *time of temptation we fall away*.

It is generally said, and with great truth, that the difficulties of virtue grow less by practice, and that by degrees it becomes pleasant and delightful. And if this be true of any virtue, it is certainly so of charity; the exercise of which is rewarded with more present pleasure than perhaps any other species of well-doing. It may therefore be thought an easy task to persevere in this duty, and to want but little our exhortation. But the mind of man is naturally fickle and inconstant; tired with the present and fond of new pursuits; changing as the scene without, or as fancy, passion, or natural temper change within. Every virtue too has its enemies, and even this of charity enow to exercise our vigilance and caution. Hence it requires some strength of mind to be, for
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any time, uniform and consistent with ourselves, to keep the same designs in view, and to pursue the same course without deviating from it. And this strength is only to be acquired, like that of the body, by use and exercise: we must frequently renew our good resolutions; revolve in our thoughts the motives upon which they are built; and keep them, by reflexion and meditation, alive and fresh in our minds.

How far we are to persevere in the exercise of our charity, in any particular instance, prudence and our own judgment must determine. But this temper of mind will naturally incline us to be patient and candid in judging of any such designs as are offered for the publick good. We shall not be hasty in receiving prejudices against such as we have seen reason to approve, and have perhaps been engaged in supporting. The characters of good and evil in most publick designs stand out so apparent and visible, that it is not easy to be deceived in our judgment about them. Yet there are arts of misrepresenting the plainest facts, and obscuring the brightest truths, which make it necessary to recommend, on some occasions, candor and at-

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tention in these enquiries. It is not many years since a new institution amongst us, I mean that of charity-schools, was universally applauded and encouraged. We have lived to see this lose much in the esteem of the world, and it hath been almost fashionable to decry it: and yet I think it certain, that every fair enquirer will still be convinced, that this is a very wise as well as christian institution; and that the objections against it have nothing but novelty to recommend and support them.

But I proceed to the *second* thing I proposed, which was to specify some of the principal obstacles which prevent the progress of this virtue in the world. These arise either from our own corrupt inclinations, or from the frowardness of others. Amongst those which we are to guard against in ourselves, the first which I shall mention, and which hath been already pointed to, is indolence: a vice of very extensive and pernicious influence. They who are freed from the necessity of thought and labour, are apt to forget all other obligations to these duties. Ease and self-indulgence grow by degrees into an habitual

tual disregard and inattention to every thing. Pleasure and amusement shut out all other concerns. And when men scarce bestow a serious thought upon themselves, it is not to be expected that they should give much of their time or care to the welfare of others.

The motives of religion are lost upon those, who cannot bear the pain of attending to them. But could they be brought to think, a moment's reflexion would teach them, that their active powers of body and mind were not given them for nothing; that they were not made for themselves alone, nor the world about them merely to minister to their ease and pleasure; that all who reap the benefits should share the burdens of society; that no virtue, or even ornament of the mind, is to be attained without pains and application; that labour is the price of every thing excellent in this life; and much more is it necessary to attain the rewards of the next.

But farther, This vice is the parent of a timorous and coward disposition of mind, which deters men from attempting any thing that is generous or great. *The sloth-*

*ful man says there is a lion in the way.** His fears magnify every real obstacle, and create a number of difficulties that are merely imaginary. Is any thing proposed for the publick good? He laments that the times will not bear it, he foresees that every man will be armed against it, that the virtuous are too few to support it, and that publick good is the last thing that will meet with publick encouragement. But it is not so. The age is not so bad as to refuse a fair entertainment to any thing that is offered for the publick welfare. There is more stagnant virtue in the world than is commonly believed, if there were but activity enough to put it in motion: witness the several charities, many of them of a kind new and untried, which have been lately set on foot, and are now flourishing among us.

Infinite are the mischiefs that arise from this over-prudence, this ungenerous diffidence and distrust of mankind. It seems almost a received maxim in the political world, that government cannot be carried on without applying to the vices and corrupt passions of men: and they who have
designed

* Proverbs xxii. 13.

designed the very best for their country, have thought it vain to attempt it 'till they have won others, by the worst condescensions, into a concurrence with them. But what is this but to despair of the commonwealth? God certainly designed that the world should be governed by virtuous men, and by virtuous means. And he hath stamped that dignity and majesty on the very aspect of virtue, that they who lead under her banner may be sure to be better followed and obeyed, than they who court submission by other measures.

A second known enemy to every publick good is avarice: a mean and sordid vice, that infects and debases every faculty of the mind it enters. — It is the mind that has no generous sentiment within to support it, and is conscious how little it deserves the friendship and good-will of mankind; that makes riches it's strength, and flies to this unnatural aid for support. There is therefore little room to hope for any thing good or charitable from this character. It is indeed strange that men should think themselves justified in accumulating riches without end, without any design of enjoying, and often without

the apprehension of wanting them; while others, whose wants and distresses call for every thing, have nothing to relieve them. But there are lower degrees of this vice, which lie more frequently concealed in the breast, and which are amongst the most prevailing reasons against the exercise of our charity. Men relieve themselves from this burden by laying it upon others. They compare their own fortunes with those that are greater, and excuse themselves from contributing to the wants of the publick, merely because there are others more able. But the rule of the scripture is, *Let him that hath little give of that little*. None are excused from giving. A deficiency in the charity of others will not make ours the less wanted. And where the wants of our neighbours call for it, it is a duty in all to contribute according to their several abilities.

A third enemy to charity, and the source of numberless publick evils, is luxury. This vice, like avarice, multiplies our wants, and by that means confines our charity at home. The demands of pleasure and pride are so great, that they who indulge in these gratifications seldom have to give to him
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that needeth : and every station of life is at present so much exposed to temptations of this sort, that this may be reckoned one of the most common as well as greatest obstructions to charity. Self-indulgence hath a natural tendency to harden the heart. The more the selfish passions prevail, the more will every thing of generous and publick spirit decline within us. Hence it is that they who live in ease and luxury are most insensible to the distresses of others, and the least apt to attend to wants which they have never felt or feared themselves. Of this unreflecting temper we have a striking example and reproof in the parable of the rich man and *Lazarus* : the former clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day ; the latter full of sores, lying at his gates, left to the dogs, and perhaps fed with less care than they. This is the picture which our Lord hath held up to the cruel and voluptuous, and which must pierce the breast with so many cutting reflexions, that I shall add no more upon this head,

Beside these domestick enemies, which every one must enquire for in his own breast, we must expect to encounter with

difficulties abroad. And first, the vices I have mentioned, as they may possibly have some sway in ourselves, so, as far as they prevail, they will arm the world against us. They who refuse to concur in any good work, must justify their standing out by bringing disparagement upon the design itself; or, where this cannot be done, by insinuating mismanagement, indirect views and motives in those who conduct it. There are men who get the character of sagacity by penetrating into the secret motives of others, and resolving every thing they do into artifice and cunning. With these there is no such thing as publick spirit in the world. The good of others is only a pretence for serving ourselves; and consequently no publick management ever satisfied, or can satisfy them. These are, for the most part, men of narrow views, as well as narrow minds: yet their insinuations are apt to be too well received, from a malevolence of heart which makes men delight in seeing the character of others levelled with their own. Every one who acts in a publick sphere, whether great or little, must stand the mark of envy and censure. And perhaps that liberty of calumniating the highest administrations, which

which is wisely tolerated for the sake of the greater good, may make this petulant temper the more prevalent and common among us. It is certain that this is the fate of all publick management. Ignorance will object and folly dictate: but it is the part of wisdom and virtue to persevere unwearied, and of charity to hear and forgive.

Again, our good designs will not always meet with the success, any more than with the esteem, which they deserve. They will sometimes be bestowed upon unworthy, sometimes upon ungrateful objects. Even among those who concur in the same good design, things will arise not always pleasing and agreeable. Diversity of opinions will create little differences and displeasures: jealousies, suspicions and evil surmises will arise. Those who are most forward will blame the tardiness of others; and in their turn be thought over-busy and officious themselves.

I am sensible, that I am led into reflexions which the present occasion will scarce seem of importance enough to justify. And it is a pleasure to observe, that there
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is nothing in our particular circumstances and situation to call for them. But as these evils are incident to all publick charities, and in some degree to be feared by all, I thought it neither useless nor foreign to my subject to mention them.

There is yet another enemy to publick good, of so malevolent a nature that it is almost dangerous to mention it, I mean that of party prejudice; which, where it prevails, destroys not only all charity, but all candour, truth, and common justice. When men are divided into factions, they are prepared to divide and to oppose each other in every thing: the approbation of one party is reason enough for dislike in the other: and if happily they ever unite in the same cause, this is a strong presumption that there is some uncommon excellence to recommend it. It is certain that nothing can be more unjust in it's principle, or more violent in it's effects, than this spirit. And if it may reasonably be hoped that societies of charity will be less infested with this evil than any other; it must too be remembered, that in societies which have no common tie of interest or bond of union, but mere will and pleasure,

sure, no evil is more to be dreaded. Those therefore who are real friends to such designs, will, above all things, be careful to avoid all appearance of this spirit in themselves; and particularly this, which is one of the strongest symptoms of it, the suspecting it in others.

These are some of the discouragements, and there might be reckoned more, which threaten, and for the most part attend the execution of the best designs. What then? Shall we sit down and lament these difficulties? Shall we not rather call up our zeal and double our ardour in opposing them? Is it not indeed matter of real joy to us that there are such difficulties to encounter? So the apostle thought. *My brethren, saith he, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations: knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience.** Were the stream of duty always smooth and unruffled, where would be the virtue of obedience? Were popular applause and honour always to wait on well-doing, how should we be sure that we acted from charity, and not from these meaner motives? These inducements to duty will indeed increase our
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* James i. 2, 3.

guilt in neglecting it : but as far as we are swayed by them, they will likewise, as I have said, take from the virtue of our obedience. In every good action, it is the sacrifice that is made, what we give up of ease, or pleasure, or profit, that makes the virtue. Without this to prove it, we shall want that satisfaction in our own virtue which is the truest, sincerest pleasure that the mind is capable of enjoying. This is what the apostle deservedly counts *all joy* to those who have been tried by temptations. A new source of pleasure arising from renouncing pleasure ; from mortifying our passions and self-love, and from the consciousness of pure, unadulterate virtue. Thus *the ways of wisdom* are at last *ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*. In vain we separate happiness from virtue : the more we shut out self-love, the more we shall be found to love ourselves, and to consult our true felicity.

Having now seen the difficulties that attend our persevering in well-doing, it may be expected that I should dwell longer on the folly and unreasonableness of being discouraged by these, and should balance against them the many motives that plead
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for this duty. As to the former of these it may be sufficient to have shewn the impure and polluted sources from whence these objections flow, and the meanness of those principles and passions to which they owe their influence. The latter, as a beaten to-pick, I shall pass over, only reminding you, from the words which follow the text, that the pleasure, which I have mentioned as arising from disinterested virtue and true benevolence, is not a mere ideal pleasure, ending in contemplation only, as the sensualist and voluptuary may be apt to think; but is the most solid and permanent of all human pleasures: which will never desert us in this life, and will become immortal in the next. *Let us not be weary, saith the apostle, in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.* Let us not respect ease or pleasure, or consider any thing but duty itself, in the practice of duty: and God will certainly find a time to reward our virtue. The present is the season of labour and culture: but the time of harvest will come, when *we shall reap according as we have sown; when we shall come again with joy, bringing our sheaves with us.* Present pleasure will indeed attend the practice of our duty; but it must come unasked,

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unsought. It must even be purchased by voluntary labour and self-denial ; but, in proportion to this labour, this pleasure itself will be more pure and perfect, and our reward will be great hereafter. The difficulties then of virtue are not real discouragements : on the contrary, they ought to be considered as a motive and spur to duty. This our Lord hath taught us, with that noble simplicity and authority which adorned all he spoke. *Call to thee the halt and the maimed, the lame and the blind ; for they cannot recompence thee : thou shalt be recompenced at the resurrection of the just.*

To apply now these reflexions to the present occasion : The charity we are assembled to promote, is so apparently excellent and useful, that it seems scarce liable to exception or misrepresentation. The intended objects of it are plainly the first objects of charity. Sickness and pain, even in a low degree, make us miserable amidst affluence and plenty : how miserable then must they make those who are deprived not only of all the extraordinary helps which their case may require, but even of the common necessities of life ? Who are destitute of all things, when all is too little to make life comfortable,

able, or perhaps supportable? How many thousands are there who, by their best industry, can but feed their families *with food convenient for them*, and whom a week's incapacity for labour must reduce to penury and want? An affliction severe enough without addition; how severe then when sickness and disease are added to it? If then any method can be found, by which all the helps and advantages which the rich enjoy can be conveyed to the poor in these circumstances, is not this what every christian, every human heart must wish? I am not here applying to your passions and affections, though these will certainly rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us, if we do not follow where God and nature intended they should lead us. But I apply to your reason and conscience, the proper source of virtue. Charity is a duty: a duty which God hath bound upon you by all the ties of nature, reason, and religion; a duty which strikes the mind with more piercing conviction, than any other; a duty which, I am sure, you own and acknowledge, and even think yourselves resolved to practise. But if this be a duty in any circumstances, it is surely so when the sick and needy in the anguish of their souls call upon us.

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Those who are most distressed have, doubtless, the first title to relief. And could we observe an exact order and proportion in the distribution of our charity, we should, I am persuaded, think ourselves obliged to begin here; and should even regret our other charities, as less properly bestowed, while any in this first class of misery remained unhelped. It is certain our blessed Saviour, the model of all virtue, in the exercise of his charity, had a principal regard to these. He went about *healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, among the people*. He did indeed, though he had little, allot a part of that little, and gave from his bag to the common wants of the poor. But the lame and the blind, the paralytick and the leper, were the first objects of his care; and *heal the sick* was a principal part of that commission which he more than once repeats to his disciples.

Again, if this species of charity is the most necessary and wanted of any, so is it here best and most effectually answered. The poor have really here almost every advantage which the highest plenty could give them. They have many advantages which
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no expence of charity could by any other means procure them ; and here procured at an expence, how little, comparatively, and how trifling ? And it is worth observing, as an argument for our perseverance, as well as for a more general concurrence in this charity, that in proportion as it is more extended even this little becomes less. I mean that the greater the number is of those that are relieved together, the less, proportionably, will be the expence of relieving each. When an establishment of this sort is once formed, and the necessary provision is made for any certain number, this number may be greatly increased with a small addition of expence to the charity. And as every little contributed here, will go much farther in removing misery and distress out of the world, than in any other conceivable way, so is that little, sure to be rightly applied to this purpose. Here is no room to be imposed upon by fraud or fiction in the objects of our charity : and the distribution of it is under such regulations, and in such hands, as cannot possibly deceive us.

Besides this, which is the first intention in these charities, other great and excellent ends are answered by them. As afflictions generally call our thoughts home to our-

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selves, and produce that consideration which always produces religion, hence these institutions are easily improved into the best schools of piety and virtue. And this advantage and use of them hath not been overlooked. The ignorant are here instructed, the bad admonished and reprov'd, and the penitent encouraged and assisted. Books of pious exhortation are put into their hands, and opportunities of joining daily in publick prayer, and frequently in the holy communion, are administered to them. And it cannot be that these pious endeavours here can be lost: rather we must suppose them more than ordinary successful, where gratitude itself will open the mind to receive instruction, and affliction to receive it seriously.

To this may be added, the improvements which the arts of healing themselves receive from these charities. For are not these institutions become the best schools in physick and surgery? Is not attendance here considered as the finishing part of education in these studies, and that which crowns the rest? If then these are deservedly esteemed among the most useful, and therefore the most honourable professions in human life, all improvements made in them must be

considered as a common benefit and advantage to mankind.

There would be no end were I to say half that might be said in favour of these charities. More, I am persuaded than is necessary hath been already said, to convince you that it is indisputably the most necessary, the most fruitful of good, the least liable to exception and abuse, of all others. What then remains but that we heartily resolve to support this, which is so happily begun among us; that we not only resolve, but be strenuous and active in supporting it; and be not easily discouraged, by any little difficulties or troubles that may arise, from persevering in it's support.

Let the indolent take his part in this pleasing task, and rejoice to be a fellow-worker in this labour that proceedeth of love. Let the avaricious exchange here his perishing wealth for the true riches, and lay up a treasure in the heavens which faileth not. Let the voluptuous taste here a pleasure more exquisite than the joys of sense; and, from the generous pleasures of benevolence and compassion, let him aspire to those that are yet more excellent, which arise from virtue and true charity.

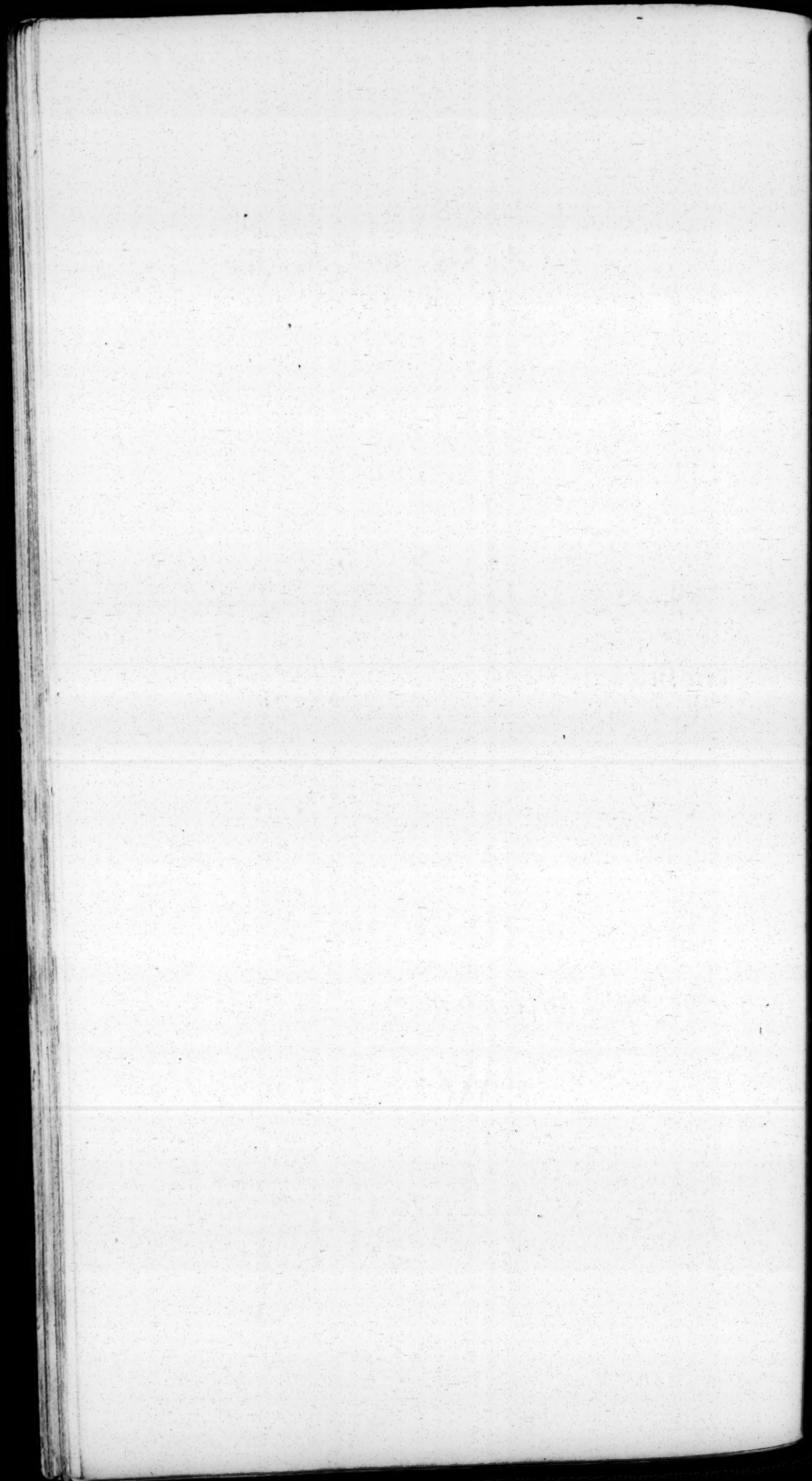
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Lastly, Let those who have already assisted in this good design, rejoice in the work which they have set their hands unto, and persist with their best endeavours to give strength, stability, and perpetuity to it. In earnest, little as it is that is here done, what have most of us done more useful in the world, or that we can take a truer satisfaction from? At how small a price, compared with the many superfluous expences which most of us find room to indulge in, have we begun a work which, when it is but well begun, hath already saved the lives of many; redeemed the lives of more from pain and misery; and which, there is at least a pleasing prospect of it, will continue a blessing to many thousands in future generations. Let us at least endeavour to deliver it down to posterity as whole and entire, as extended and improved, and as much recommended by our example as we can. And may the blessing of heaven attend your endeavours here, and be their reward hereafter.

T H E
D U T I E S
O F

INDUSTRY, FRUGALITY, AND SOBRIETY.

A SERMON preached before a SOCIETY of TRADESMEN
and ARTIFICERS, at St. CHAD's, SHREWSBURY,
On EASTER MONDAY, 1766.



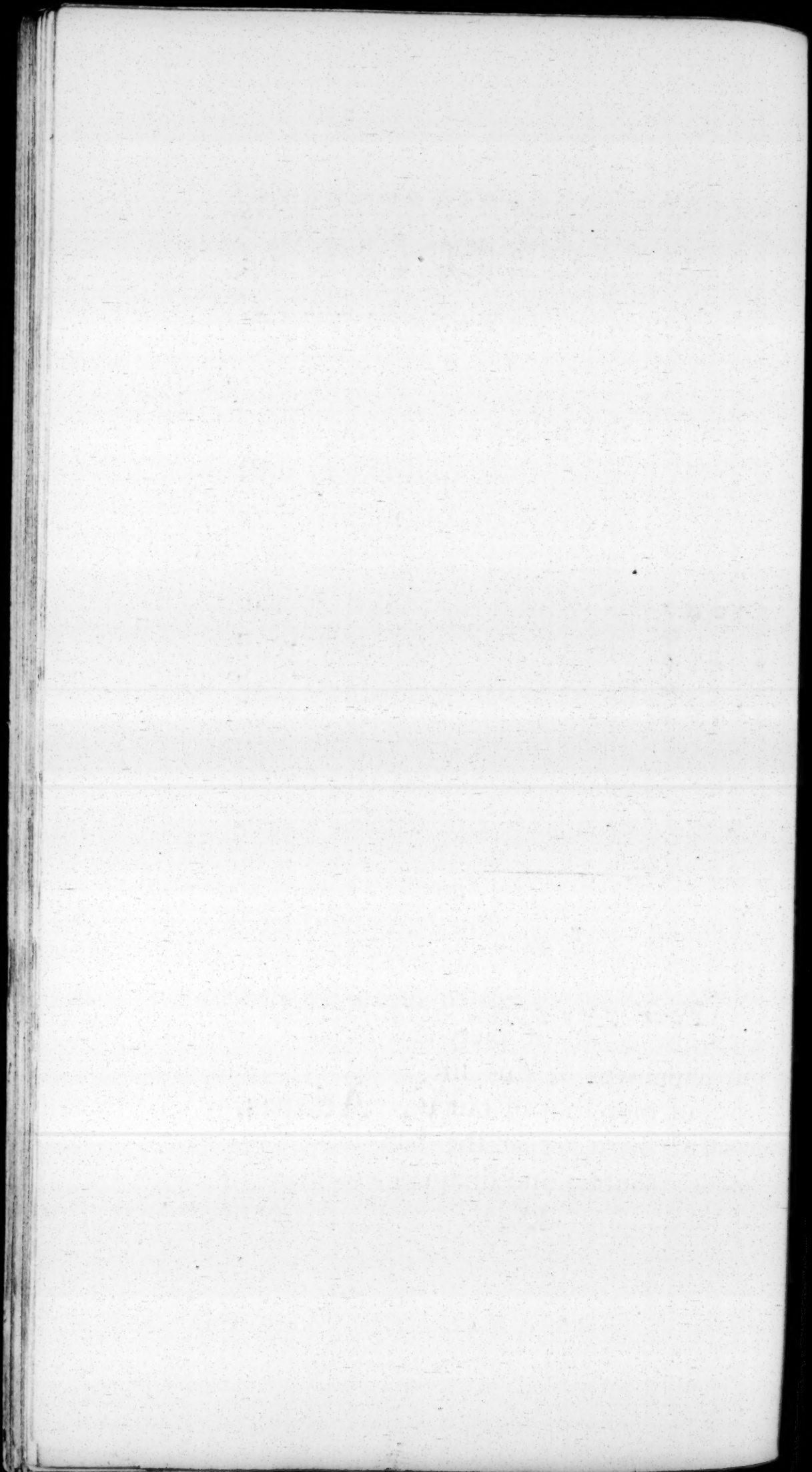
TO THE
MEMBERS of the SOCIETY of
TRADESMEN, &c. and to the
poorer Inhabitants of *St. Chad's,*
Shrewsbury.

I PUT the following sermon into
your hands ; and desire you will
accept it as a token of my sincere
love and regard for you. In con-
sequence of which I make it my
earnest request, that you will read
and consider it with seriousness and
attention : and I am sure you will
be the happier, as well as the better
men for practising the duties it re-
commends.

I am,

Your very affectionate friend,

W. Adams.





GALATIANS vi. 2.

*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil
the law of Christ.*

***** I *****
I *****

T is with great pleasure that I
take the part here assigned me
in assisting the designs of a so-
ciety, formed as I am persuaded
upon the principles of charity, and regu-
lated by those of religion and virtue.

The great end and design of true reli-
gion is to make men happy both in this
world and the next. The latter of these, as
it is the great concern of all mankind, so it
is in the power of all to secure to them-
selves, by a life of piety and virtue. But
our happiness in this life is for wise rea-
sons put more out of our power. Our en-
joyments here are at the best mixed with
crosses, troubles and disappointments; the

better to prove our faith and virtue. The best of men are exposed in common with the worst, to sickness, pain and losses, and are often brought into want and misery by accidents which neither industry nor prudence could prevent. Yet still in such circumstances religion is a sure source of consolation, and brings with it the best succours and support that can be had ; by not only fortifying the mind with patience and resignation, extending our prospects and hopes into another life, and assuring us there of a happiness proportioned to our steadfastness and perseverance in well-doing ; but by deriving to us likewise the compassion, assistance and relief of our fellow-christians and neighbours ; who are bound by the religion they profess, *above all things to have fervent charity towards their brethren ; to have the same care one for another ; and if one member suffers, as members of the same body, to suffer with it.*

If then it be the intention of religion to procure the happiness of mankind ; all such designs as are directed to this end are so far acts of religion : and when entered upon with a true christian temper and from a principle of charity, will certainly be accepted

cepted as such ; as instances of duty and obedience to God. It is therefore, I think, an appointment of great propriety and decorum in the present and other like charitable societies, to meet thus at times in a religious manner ; to offer up your vows and oblations of charity to heaven ; and to beg the blessing of God on your pious endeavours.

It is indeed a pleasure to see, while so many parties and meetings are daily forming for pleasure and idleness, for the support of factions and uncharitable distinctions, and often for nothing better than revelling and riot ; that there are not wanting some which have a nobler end for their object ; and which it is no way unworthy of our character as men or as christians to join in. This praise I think we may assume to the present society : the design of which is by the joint and united endeavours of many, to guard against and repel the evils which are alike incident to all ; and which, every one singly and unsupported may be unable to bear. This is in a very proper sense to *bear one another's burdens* ; to share freely and willingly the misfortunes, the infirmities, wants and troubles of others :

and is so far an act of charity, and a *fulfilling the law of Christ*. But it is farther at the same time an act of prudence too, as it is a providing for every one's own wants and those of his family; it is throwing his own burden into the common stock; and purchasing by the relief he ministers to others, a title to the same relief in his turn. Both these principles then conspire to promote the present institution. As far as you are influenced by the latter, though it doth not deserve the name and character of charity, it is however a commendable act of duty. It is a christian prudence to arm ourselves by a provident foresight against the evils of life; to prepare ourselves for a chearful submission to the dispensations of providence; and to lay up for the benefit and security of his family, every man, from time to time, some little, as God hath prospered him.

But I doubt not most of you are actuated by the nobler principle I have mentioned; and take a generous pleasure in preventing the wants of your brethren, and in resolving that none of your friends and associates in this labour of love, shall be destitute in his distress of any helps and assistances you
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can give him. This, as I said, is true christian charity, and is in the best sense *fulfilling the law of Christ — the royal law of love*; as the apostle calls it: which enjoins no duties so much as those of tenderness, gentleness, compassion, feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, visiting the sick, and whatever else is generous, kind, beneficent and good-natured; whatever tends to promote the happiness or to lessen the griefs and sorrows of mankind.

This is so considerable a part of our christian duty, that it is frequently in scripture spoken of as comprizing the whole. *Love, or charity, saith the apostle, is the fulfilling of the law. And whosoever loveth his brother hath fulfilled the law.* It is certain that there are other duties, all that are comprehended under piety and temperance, equally necessary and indispensable with these. But it is here supposed that the duty we are speaking of cannot consist in all its extent and latitude without including the rest. The same benevolence of mind, which leads us to love not only those who are endeared to us by relation, friendship, or kindness received, but even those who are most estranged from us by a difference
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in religion, party or even by resentment and ill-will, will certainly lead us to love God, the fountain of all good, who made us what we are, and gave us all that we possess. The heart which feels for the misery of others, and melts with pity even at the distresses of an enemy, will surely overflow with gratitude towards the common Father of Being, who provideth for all things living *with plenteousness*; *whose compassions never fail*; and *whose mercies are seen over all his works*. And that diffusive charity which carries us as it were out of ourselves, and interests us in the welfare of all mankind, is in it's whole nature opposite to the narrow principle of self-love; and can taste but little pleasure or happiness in self-indulgence, or the gratifications of appetite and sensual inclination. Hence it is, that love or christian charity is said to be the fulfilling — to be not a part, but the sense and spirit of the whole moral law. The same principle which leads you to concur in this good work, will, if opened and unfolded into all it's consequences, lead you into all righteousness; to fulfil the duties you owe to God and yourselves, as well as those to your neighbour. And it is with pleasure, that I observe a proper at-
tention

tention paid to these in the regulations under which your society is governed, and by which it's meetings are modelled and conducted. These are so well calculated for all the ends that can be answered by such an institution, that I have little left me but to commend to your constant practice the charity, piety and sobriety which they inculcate; and to exhort you to extend the influence of these principles farther, into your whole life and conversation.

And first, as charity is the ground and foundation on which your little society is built, this as we are taught in the text, is fulfilling in a particular manner the law of Christ. For charity is in a peculiar manner the command of Christ. *A new commandment, says He, I give unto you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another.** This then is so necessary to the disciples of Christ, that we cannot take to ourselves the name or character of christians without it. And as we have above seen that charity in it's largest extent, can scarce consist without the practice of the
other

* John xiii. 34, 35.

other christian duties of piety and temperance, so it is certain that we cannot in any good degree pretend to these virtues without that charity, which I am recommending. *If any man, saith the apostle, say I love God, and loveth not his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? ** And again, *Who so hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? †* That is, how can such an one pretend to piety and religion, when he is wanting in a common duty bound upon him by nature and reason, and the common ties of humanity; but more especially recommended, and more earnestly than almost any other, by the precepts of the gospel? In like manner, in vain do we pretend to that command over ourselves, that subordination of our appetites and passions to reason, in which the virtue of temperance consists, when self-love still contracts our hearts, and shuts out all charitable care and concern for others. It is therefore with great propriety that charity takes the first rank

* 1 John iv. 20.

† 1 John iii. 17.

rank amongst the christian graces, as it is necessary in some degree to qualify us for the very name of christians; and as it springs from or begets in us that temper of mind which is naturally productive of every other virtue.

But there are two of these virtues which I must mention as more immediately connected with charity, and in the lower ranks of life so necessary to the exercise of it, that they must be included in the duty itself: and these are industry and frugality. With respect to the first of these, the apostle hath given it in charge to those of low degree, that *they labour, working with their hands the thing that is good, that they may have to give to him that needeth.** Without these virtues to supply and increase your store, you cannot hope for the happy power of relieving others by your bounty, or succouring them in their distress. Nor can you so securely attribute to yourselves the virtue and merit of charity from any good-will or kind wishes you may bear to your neighbour, when you have by your own faults deprived yourselves of the means
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* Ephes. iv. 28.

of giving the proper proof of these to the world and to yourselves. Without these virtues, instead of the pleasure of relieving others, and of being independent in yourselves, you will soon be in danger of wanting this relief from others : and that without the satisfaction of deserving it or any just ground to expect it. For the injunction of *St. Paul* is founded on the justest reason, *If any man will not work, neither let him eat.* * Instead of the praise and character of charity, you will incur the heavy censure of the same apostle : *If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

It is the first of these virtues, industry, which makes the artificer and the labourer as useful and valuable as any members in society. And as God hath allotted to men very different stations and conditions of life, and assigned them different gifts and talents to profit withal, different occupations and employments for the good of the whole ; therefore to be diligent in the several provinces in which he hath placed us,

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* 2 Theff. iii. 10.

† 1 Tim. v. 8.

is a duty we owe to him as well as to our neighbour and ourselves. It is our proper business, and a sort of trust reposed in us by the governor of the world : and therefore it is not only an offence against society, but a breach of our duty to heaven to desert or neglect it. And on the other hand, a diligent discharge of this duty from a principle of conscience towards God, is in it's proper time and place an act of religious obedience ; and will surely be as well accepted of God, as any act of piety which may be thought more immediately addressed to his honour.

And this I the rather mention because there are, I fear, some well-disposed persons who think it pious to retire more from the world and from business ; to shut out all secular concerns from their minds ; and to spend their whole time in the exercises of religion, devotion and prayer. But these duties, how necessary soever to the christian life, are not intended to exclude us from being useful and beneficial to the world ; from taking care of our families ; or from doing what our rank and relation to the publick require. We may allot a sufficient time to our devotions without interfering

fering with these, which are certainly some of the first duties of a christian. We may live in the world as Christ and his apostles did, and be busy in doing all the good we can, without setting our hearts too much upon it; without centering our hopes and affections in it; and without being polluted by it. Let me then exhort you to be chearful and active in that state of life to which God hath called you, and to consider this chearfulness and industry as acts of piety and duty to God: and at the same time to be ever punctual and attentive to the more immediate duties of religion and the care of your souls; that by this double diligence you may *make your calling and election sure*. Be often recollecting, as you will have many vacant minutes in your busiest days to do, the state of your souls, the great motives, hopes and prospects of religion. Let every morning and evening witness to the offering up your prayers and praises to God: and this will consecrate the labours of the day, bring a *blessing on your basket and on your store*, and make you *rejoice in all that you put your hands unto*.

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But above all, neglect not that day which God in especial mercy to the laborious part of mankind, and in condescension to their spiritual wants, has consecrated to rest and a cessation from worldly cares; that they may have leisure for reflection and retirement, and to attend the duties of religion without distraction. Without this your spiritual powers will insensibly decay; your best resolutions will be forgotten, and the spirit of religion and piety, the support of every virtue, will wear out and be lost. And on the other hand, by a due improvement of this time you will continually grow in grace; the motives and principles of virtue will be kept ever awake and active in your breasts; and you will be secured in your commerce with the world against all its temptations. Let nothing therefore tempt you to absent yourselves on this day from the publick service of the church; or from allotting some part of it to the instruction of your families; to the examining the state of your spiritual concerns; and the renewing in yourselves all such resolutions as may be necessary to guard against *the sins which do most easily beset you*. If business, however urgent, and still more

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if idleness or pleasure rob you of this time; this neglect will not only bring your virtue into danger, but will itself add to the number of your crimes.

But I proceed to the other virtue which I mentioned as instrumental and necessary to your charity, which is frugality; or a prudent and virtuous use of that which through the blessing of God is gained by your labour and industry. And this is the more necessary to be mentioned at a time when luxury is not only prevailing among the great and wealthy, but has deeply infected all degrees of men amongst us. If this, as is frequent, disables men of fortune from doing any thing that is good or useful to the world, it is certain that the least degree of it, the least indulgence in vain and unnecessary expence must put it out of the power of those who subsist by their labour, not only to do the good offices they would to their brethren; but even to make the provision they ought for their own families. It is frugality that must make our industry useful to ourselves. For to what purpose do we labour for that which profiteth not, or perhaps may be only the means to betray us into sin? But where
these

these virtues are united, how oft do we see men by these alone maintain their families in neatness and plenty, free from want and care at home, and able to extend their good offices abroad? How oft is their pleasure and innocence, their health and peace and content of mind to be envied by those who live in greater splendor and in all the pomp of honour and power? And on the other hand, is it not melancholy often to see what has been purchased by painful industry and labour squandered away in unprofitable and foolish recreations; often in the guilty indulgences of gaming, drinking and the like — to see the artificer of better skill, instead of making his family more happy and himself more useful; tempted by his greater gains to indulge himself only the more in idleness or sinful pleasures? There is not sure a more affecting or a more pitiable object than that of a family unfed, unclothed, untaught at home, while the master of it is wantonly spending what should support them, abroad. Where are the bowels of him who can enjoy either pleasure or ease in his mind, while he makes himself deaf to the cries of want and misery, which he may be said by his own cruelty to inflict on those who are *his bone*

and his flesh? There is, I hope, no one among you of a character so immoral and profligate as this. The present virtuous design in which you are engaged, is indeed a sufficient proof of the contrary. I shall therefore conclude this head with observing, that the virtues I have mentioned are not only necessary to the character and perfection of Charity, but are the only sure preservative of common honesty. They are these virtues alone which can secure you against want; against all temptation to cheat or defraud your neighbour, to make unlawful gains by extortion, to sell your conscience for a bribe, your honesty and all your moral worth for filthy lucre's sake. By these only can you merit the trust and confidence of the world. They are the only pledge and security you can give of your fidelity and truth.

A second thing which I mentioned as deserving the regard you have paid to it, is that of observing the rules of piety and morality in all your meetings; and of banishing profaneness, detraction, and scandal from your discourse. The first of these is so contrary to that piety, the importance
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and necessity of which I have been recommending, that I need not enlarge upon it. It is so contrary to the spirit of religion, to the plain precepts of the gospel, to that reverence of heart and mind which we owe to the divine Being; so naturally tending to extirpate all sense of God and goodness from the mind; that it seems impossible for any one who calls himself a christian to allow himself seriously in the practice of it; or otherwise than through thoughtlessness or surprise to be ever guilty of it. It is so contrary to common sense and reason, so foolish and absurd in itself, that it would be a reproach to us as men, if we did not bear the name and character of christians. The latter, as it is at all times sinful, and one of the highest offences against christian charity, is particularly unfitting in a society of which charity is the very principle and foundation.

I proceed therefore to the last thing which I was to recommend, and which deserves particularly at your meetings to be attended to, and that is sobriety: a virtue not the less amiable or valuable for the countenance and indulgence which is too freely given to

those who sin against it. It is indeed a reproach to our age and country that the contrary vice is so frequent as to be little molested by shame or censure. There is no source of evil so fruitful, none that has introduced so much pain and misery, poverty and infamy, sickness and death into the world as this. How many do we see reduced by it to beggary and want; how many thousands ruined in their health and strength, cut short in the prime of life, or reduced to a sudden, miserable and contemptible old age? How often is the peace and happiness of families disturbed, and how many scenes of guilt and wickedness are occasioned by it? Let me then exhort you to avoid with all your care and diligence this great and powerful evil. Let nothing tempt you to dishonour yourselves by a vice so mean and unmanly. Learn to prefer the silent but exquisite delights of temperance and innocence to all the mad and polluted joys it can offer you. Remember that this vice stands condemned in scripture, among the blackest, and such as in particular unfit us for the kingdom of heaven. *Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor*
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*extortioners, nor drunkards shall inherit the kingdom of God and of Christ.**

And if any of you are unhappily brought under the power of this sin, let me again call upon you to consider what you owe to your families, as well as to God and to yourselves. How happy may you make those who have a right to expect every thing from you, by abstaining from this vice. I am sensible that there is no habit which it requires more resolution to conquer and subdue than this. It requires rule as well as resolution. You must lay down to yourselves some wholesome regulations, a plan of life and conduct that may keep you out of the reach of temptation; some limitations within which your virtue will be secure, and which you must minutely and religiously observe, if you mean to secure it. By these means, if steadily persisted in, and by the grace of God which will never be wanting to the endeavours of virtue, you will infallibly break the power of the most rooted and inveterate habits. Every victory gained will add strength to your virtue; and every future

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* 1 Cor. vi. 9. Gal. v. 19.

conquest will be still easier. Be not then discouraged by the difficulty which you must first engage ; but remember that this difficulty, if not soon encountered, will become greater. Remember that it is this difficulty which makes it virtue ; that the greater the difficulty the greater will be the virtue of conquering it ; that you will thus gain the satisfaction of proving your own sincerity, of making some atonement for your past misconduct, and of offering up an acceptable sacrifice to God.

And for those who are yet happily strangers to this vice, a little resolution and reflection will arm them against it. It is difficult to break the force of bad habits ; but it is easy to avoid contracting them. Avoid idleness and bad company, which chiefly expose you to temptations from without : and you will have little to oppose from appetite and inclination within. For this vice is wholly unnatural. Nature always revolts, till corrupted by custom, against it. Be always then employed in the business of your profession. Reflect on the difference betwixt those who live soberly and orderly among your acquaintance, and those who spend their substance,

stance, their health as well as fortune in riotous living: and ask yourselves which of these two characters you would chuse for your own. Make the former your examples, your companions and friends: and shun the company and meetings of the latter, as you would an infected air, in order to preserve your health.

Lastly, Let me exhort you to extend the good principles with which you here set out through the whole of your life and conversation. Remember that you carry every where with you the character of men, and of christians. Let that prudent care which hath led you early to provide for your future well-being in this life, be extended to your greatest and only true interest, your happiness in the next. Be careful to *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*; that when all the provisions, comforts and friendships of this life shall fail, you may be received into an everlasting habitation. If it be your prudence to provide against infirmity, age and misfortune here; what folly, inconsistency and madness will it be to neglect those provisions which are necessary to your eternal well-being hereafter? All other societies shall fail;

fail ; but this shall continue for ever. The kingdom of Christ shall have no end. His church shall endure throughout all ages. Amidst all your engagements then, your connections and relations here, be ever mindful of that spiritual community of which you are members, that better kingdom to which you belong. In all your dealings with men, remember to act by *the law of Christ* ; that when you leave this perishing mutable society, you may gain the place of fellow-citizens with the saints in the heavenly *Jerusalem* ; *a city which hath foundations, immutable and eternal, whose builder and maker is God.*



As this discourse may fall into the hands of some who are not well provided with books of devotion, I have added two prayers for Morning and Evening: which I recommend to be constantly used by those who have no better forms at hand.

A MORNING PRAYER.

O LORD, to whom I owe my life and every comfort of it, I most humbly pray that I may live always mindful of my dependence upon thee, and the mercies I have received from thee. May I consider that no action, word or thought of mine is unknown to thee; and therefore be at all times careful to think, to speak, and to do what is right. As I hope to be eternally happy, O let me seriously attend to those duties which must qualify me for being so. Grant that I may keep it always uppermost in my thoughts, that thy favour is only to be obtained by the holiness of my life, and by doing in it all the good in my power. Let it be ever in my heart to do all kind offices, and to promote peace and happiness among my neighbours. May
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I be true and faithful to all my engagements; especially to the promises and vows of obedience which I have made to thee — to govern my passions — to correct in myself every vicious inclination — to keep my body in temperance, soberness and chastity — to be true and just in all my dealings — and to do to others what I should in their case expect them to do unto me. Give me health and strength chearfully to go through the duties of my calling. Bless the labour of my hands, and accept of my honest industry, as a part of the duty I owe to thee, as well as to my family and country. Let no temptations of pleasure or of profit rob me of my honesty and virtue. In thy favour and the hope of thy eternal mercy I shall be happy in whatever station of life thou art pleased to place me. Let this hope be my comfort, my refuge and support in all circumstances; through *Jesus Christ* our Lord, in whose name and words, I pray for all mankind; *Our Father, &c.*

AN EVENING PRAYER.

O LORD, who hast preserved me this day, I bless thee for thus continuing thy care of, and goodness to me. Grant, that I may shew my thankfulness by my sincere endeavours to perform thy will in all things. I most humbly beg forgiveness of every sin that I have committed; and it is likewise my most earnest prayer that I may never so dangerously deceive myself, as to think thou wilt forgive my sins, if I do not forsake them. Let it be my firmest belief that nothing can recommend me to thy favour, if I do not lead an holy and useful life; and that when I allow myself in any kind of guilt, even my prayers will be an abomination to thee. Give me grace so to live, as always in thy presence: and since all my actions and thoughts are known to thee, let me neither in deed or will be guilty of any thing that can displease thee. Enable me to improve in virtue and goodness; to correct in myself every bad habit, and to resist every vicious inclination. May nothing disturb my rest
this

this night. Vouchsafe me such refreshing sleep, as may fit me for the duties of the following day. Thou alone knowest how near my death may be; and as every day brings me nearer to it, grant that I may become every day fitter for it. Prosper all who have done me good; pardon all who have designed me evil: and grant that we may at last meet in peace and love in thy everlasting kingdom, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord and Saviour; in whose name and words, I farther pray: *Our Father, &c.*



The LORD's PRAYER,

*As it is sung in ST. CHAD'S CHURCH,
after the LECTURE on that part of the
CATECHISM.*

I.

FATHER of all, be thou alone
In heaven and earth ador'd;
Earth is thy footstool, heaven thy throne,
Thou universal Lord.

II.

What power to praise thee and obey
Thy grace to man hath giv'n,
That praise and duty let him pay,
Till earth resemble heaven.

III.

This day be bread and peace our lot,
All else beneath the sun
Thou knows't, if best bestow'd or not;
And let thy will be done.

IV.

Thy love expecting, let us love,
Reliev'd, let us relieve;
Thy pity let our pity move,
Forgive, as we forgive.

When

V.

When from without temptations come,
Or lusts inflame within,
Thy grace descend and save us from
The greatest evil, Sin.

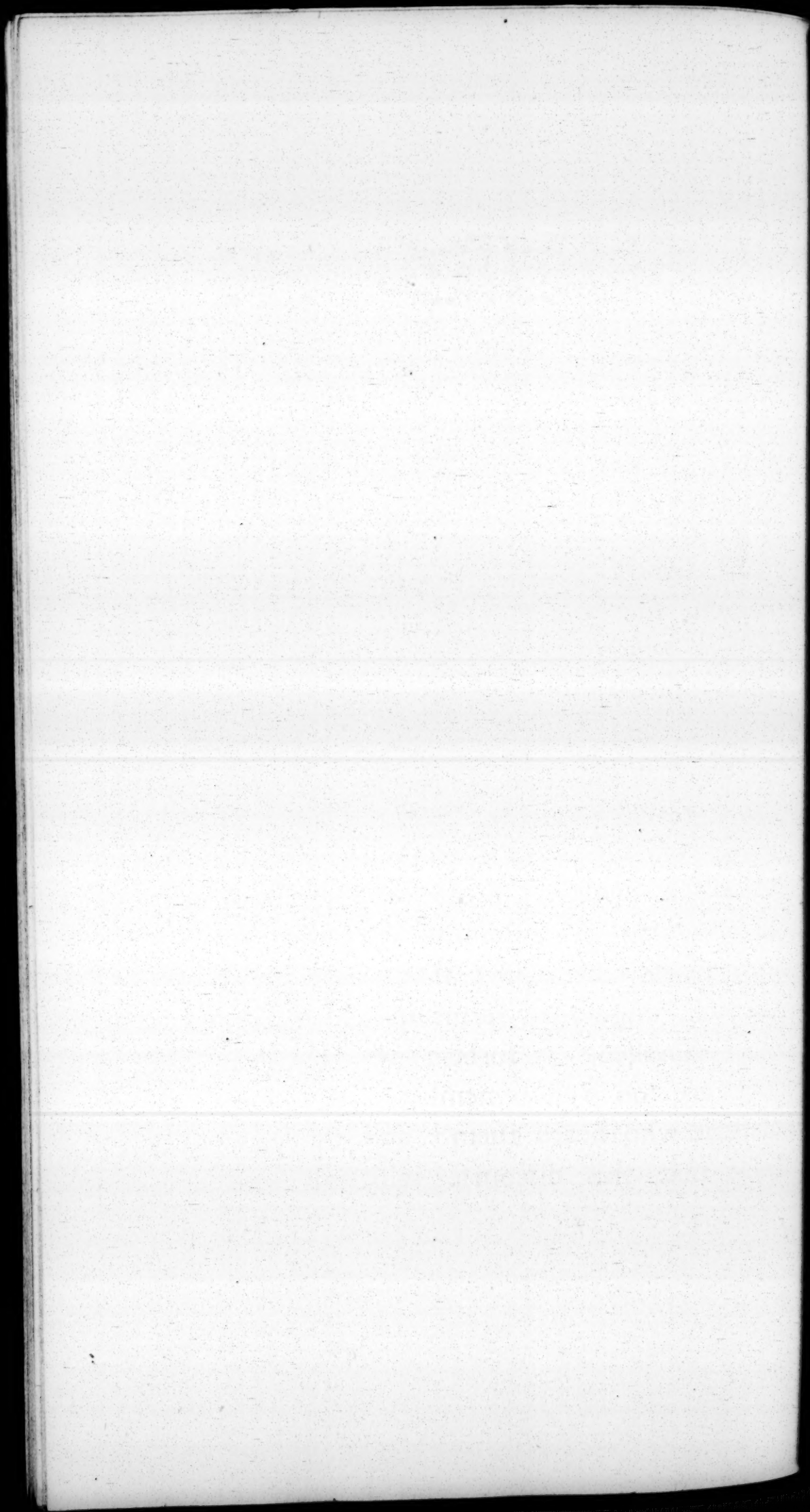
VI.

Supreme in power all nature waits
Obedient at thy call;
O first, O last, for thought too great,
O source and end of all.



A
T E S T
O F
T R U E A N D F A L S E
D O C T R I N E S.

A SERMON preached at St. CHAD's, SHREWSBURY,
September 24, 1769.





P R E F A C E.

THE following discourse was occasioned by a sermon preached in my church, so contrary to the sentiments of religion which I wish to imprint, and am always inculcating on the minds of my hearers, that I thought myself obliged, on the first opportunity, to give my testimony against it. The preacher is a person of known learning, and, as I am informed, a principal leader among those who are called methodists. The particular tenets which gave this offence, and the rash, unguarded terms in which they were expressed, I forbear to mention. They are too well remembered by many of those who heard them: and it is probable that this discourse will fall into

P R E F A C E.

the hands of few others. It is now published at the request of many, not with a view to inflame the minds of angry and contentious men, or to kindle an unchristian spirit of strife and bitterness against the teachers of these doctrines. On the contrary, there is no one, as all who know me will testify, more forward than I have ever been, to do justice to their good intentions; to the piety and other virtues of those who patronize them; and even to the exemplary zeal in their parochial duties of many of their pastors: no one, as all who hear me will testify, more careful to inculcate the duties of candour and forbearance, and the most extensive charity to those who differ in opinion from us. But when the first principles of religion seem to be deserted, and the first duties of it superseded as fruitless and unnecessary; when the goodness and moral attributes of the deity are indirectly arraigned, and this with an undoubting confidence, and an air imperious and decisive, tending to
blind

P R E F A C E.

blind the minds and surprize the credulity of the vulgar; to which I have more than once been an ear-witness in my own church: it cannot be unbecoming me to warn those with whom I am concerned, against being deceived with vain words; — against hastily believing that their own pastor is a setter forth of false doctrines, and preaches another gospel instead of that of Christ, when he teaches them, as he always does, that religion is designed to enforce the practice of piety and all good works, and that the end of all it's doctrines and institutions, as well as of it's precepts, is holiness of life. With this intention I put this discourse into their hands, which in many parts of it has no immediate reference to the sermon that occasioned it, but to other doctrines that are supposed to stand connected in the same system with it; and in which some of the boldest assertions there advanced are for the reasons above-hinted, over-looked. The little time that could be had for preparing it, will ex-

P R E F A C E.

cuse the want of accuracy and method that will be observed in it. As this could not be redressed without new modelling the whole, it is here printed with very little amendment, just as it was preached.





I JOHN iv. 1.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.

*** I *** T is remarkable, that from the first establishment of christianity, even in the times of the apostles themselves, it should be thought necessary to caution men against false teachers and seducing spirits, who corrupted the sincere milk of the word, and led men astray from the ways of truth and godliness.

No sooner were the epistles of St. *Paul* transcribed and read in the churches, than over-curious and speculative men put their own comments upon them, and made them speak doctrines contrary to the mind of the apostle and to true religion : *in which*
epistles

*epistles of our beloved Paul, saith St. Peter, there are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.** It was probably some hasty and erroneous conclusions drawn from hence, which St. James sets himself to confute in his general epistle: in which he cautions his readers against entertaining too high an opinion of the efficacy or virtue of faith; as if it were necessarily productive of obedience, or could make any compensation for the want of obedience. *My brethren, saith he, what doth it profit, if a man say I have faith and have not works? Can faith save him? Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

Men have ever been fond of placing their religion in opinions more than in practice, of dividing into sects and parties, saying I am of *Paul*, I am of *Apollos*, and I of *Cephas*, employing their zeal about matters of little moment and of doubtful disputation, instead of applying the great and plain truths of the gospel to the amend-

* 2 Pet. iii. 16.

† James ii. 14, 18.

amendment of their lives, and purification of their hearts. Hence the kingdom of Christ is divided against itself. Scripture and authority are pleaded for contradictory opinions, and where these are found insufficient, the witness of the spirit is sometimes presumptuously called in, and immediate inspiration or illumination from heaven indirectly, if not openly, challenged, to authorize doctrines that are a reproach to reason as well as christianity.

Our Lord therefore early forewarned his followers to beware of false teachers and pretended prophets who should come in his name. And the apostle in the text admonishes us not to believe every pretence to revelation, or to a commission from heaven, but to try the spirits whether they are of God, and have a well-grounded claim to his authority.

An excellent and plain rule for judging of the truth and importance of religious doctrines, as well as of the danger and different degrees of malignity in error; and which is yet of more consequence to us, of our own proficiency in religious duties, I have lately laid before you in the words
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of our blessed Saviour, *By their fruits ye shall know them.**

There is yet another test by which we may try religious opinions, as extensive in it's use and as easy in the application, which is, by comparing them with the great leading principles of religion, such as are universally acknowledged to be essential and fundamental to it.

In religion, as in all other parts of knowledge, there are some first allowed truths, from which there lies no appeal, which are either implied in the very idea of religion, or are however every where acknowledged and received for true; which want no argument to inforce them, and can scarce by any argument be made clearer or plainer than they are. Such are these that follow; that God is the righteous governor of the world; that he loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity; that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and that he will not let the guilty go free — that man is endowed with a faculty of understanding to discern be-
twixt

* Matt. vii. 16.

twixt good and evil, and with a will or power to chuse or refuse the evil or the good — that he is the creature of God, and accountable to him for the use of those faculties or powers, and obliged to exert them in a right manner towards God and himself as well as his neighbour : in a word, that he is obliged, as he tends the favour of his maker and judge, to practise what is good and to avoid what is evil.

These are truths which shine by their own light, which are every where supposed, and often appealed to in the scriptures, and without which no religion that deserves to be called rational, can be supposed to exist. These principles, whatever else we may doubt about, must remain undisputed. They cannot, without shaking the foundations of religion itself, be brought in question. They are indeed the very reason and meaning of all religion, without which it would be a vain and senseless thing. These then are a standard or test, by which we may in many cases determine about religious opinions, and discover the error and malignity of false doctrines. Truth is always uniform, and every

every truth consistent with every other. In other words, whatever contradicts a known truth must be false. Now the truths we have here laid down are such, as it requires no learning or superior knowledge to comprehend; they are obvious to every capacity, and convincing to every understanding. Men may darken counsel by words without knowledge, may obscure the brightest truths by sophistry and words without meaning, but if we confront their reasonings with, or weigh them in the balance against these momentous and self-evident truths, their vanity and emptiness will readily appear. They may find difficult texts of scripture, which, when taken by themselves, may be made to sound in favour of the strangest doctrines: but be assured, that the sense of these, when taken in connection with the whole, will ever be found agreeable to the truths before us; because God cannot deny himself, nor his word and his will be at variance with his attributes, and with the plain dictates of conscience, which is the voice of God within us.

To

To the truth of these first principles, I cannot doubt the assent of every one who hears me. To assist you in the application of them, or rather to shew that you can want no assistance but the exercise of your own reason, I shall point out the use of them in some particular instances.

First then, if we are told that the law of God is so pure and perfect, that we cannot, with our best endeavours, equal it in practice, but must in very many instances fall short of it; and, at the same time, that nothing but universal and unremitted obedience will be accepted at his hands; that the least sins of the least of his creatures are of infinite guilt in his sight; that no amends can be made or pardon obtained for any sins that are past, by repentance and a better obedience for the future; that God has no mercy but in consequence of the mediation and intercession of Christ: * this is plainly representing

* Some of the least exceptionable passages in the sermon which gave occasion to this, were the following: *There are no little sins. To have little sins you must have a little God. God hath no mercy but through Christ the redeemer.*

presenting God as an hard task-master, reaping where he hath not sown, and gathering where he hath not strewed; as requiring more from us than he hath given us power to perform; and is contrary to all the principles we have laid down.

The law of God does not indeed allow of any dispensation for sin of any kind or degree. It would be a contradiction in terms to suppose this. For what is sin but the transgression of the law? and the law cannot certainly permit the transgression of itself. But the righteousness of God, as governor of the world, implies that he is gracious and merciful, as well as just: that his subjects are sufficiently indulged and encouraged; that merciful allowances will be made for the unavoidable infirmities of our nature; and that even for greater crimes, upon our sincere repentance and amendment, we shall be forgiven, and in some degree restored to favour. This is the voice of reason and equity. And it is the voice of scripture too. For what saith the old testament? *God will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss. He knoweth whereof we are made,*

made, and remembereth that we are but dust. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon.† And what faith the new? Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.‡ If we confess our sins; God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.§ This is clear and precise, and the contrary tenets which admit no alleviation of sin in any case, or of pardon upon repentance, are plainly repugnant to scripture as well as reason, and to that mercy and goodness, which by both we are taught to ascribe to the divine Being.*

It is certain that the pardon of sin, tendered as it is by the gospel to the greatest sinners, upon their faith and repentance, and including, as it always does, not only a remission of the penalty due to it, but all that latitude of grace and favour which is implied in the christian salvation, that is, a restoring the penitent to the hopes

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* Psalm cxxx. 3. ciii. 14.

† Acts iii. 19.

† Isa. lv. 7.

§ 1 John i. 9.

of heaven and immortality, is always represented in the writings of the apostles, as procured for us by the merits of Christ. But this whole dispensation, the redemption of the world by Christ, is itself ascribed to the original goodness and love of God to mankind, as it's moving cause. The language of scripture is, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son.** In this was manifested the love of God towards us, that he sent his only begotten son into the world. † He was made to us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. ‡ The language of our blessed Lord is, that he was sent, appointed of God, that he came not to do his own will, but the will of his father which sent him. Who then shall tell us, that God hath forgotten to be gracious, and hath shut up his loving kindness in displeasure?

Next, if we are taught that good works are of no account, and that our best obedience will avail us nothing in the sight of God; this is contrary to all the principles we have laid down, destroys all the notions

* John iii. 16.

† 1 John iv. 9.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 30.

notions we have of God's moral government of the world, and reduces religion, as we shall presently see, to a system of mystery and speculation only, rather than a rule of life and conduct.

It is certain that our best works can give us no claim of right on the justice of God. We have already received more at his hands than all our services can repay. Our works and obedience have no merit of this kind. But if God has any mercy, grace, or favour for his creatures, and it is surely impious to doubt this, it must be obedience, a right conduct, in other words, righteousness and holiness of life, which recommends us to his favour. The sinner cannot be as the righteous in his sight. The great end of government is to secure obedience in the subject, and the only title to favour in the subject must be obedience to the governing power. We cannot so much as suppose any covenant between God and man, but this must be the condition on the part of man. Accordingly we are every where told, that *God will judge every man according to his works* * — that *they that have*

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* Rom. ii 6.

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* Rom. ii 6.

*done good shall go into life eternal, and they that have done evil into everlasting punishment. **

But here another part of the system I mentioned comes in aid of this doctrine. It will be said that faith is the substitute of good works, and the only stipulated condition of acceptance with God, and that we are expressly told by *St. Paul*, that *we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* † This is one of the passages of scripture, which as I have above said, are frequently abused to a sense quite foreign to the truth. By faith is here plainly meant, embracing the gospel, and the justification mentioned, has no respect, nor can with propriety be applied to the present state of christians, but to those only who had lately embraced the gospel, who had been converted from Jews and Gentiles, and become Christians. These, on their receiving the gospel, or professing their faith in Christ, were admitted to a pardon for all their past sins, which is the thing meant by justification, and was significantly represented to them by baptism, which

* Matt. xxv. 46.

† Rom. iii. 28.

which denoted the washing away of sin. They were admitted to a new state of trial and probation by the grace and favour of God, not for any works or merit of their own: but were undoubtedly expected from that time, and are every where in scripture called upon, to lead holy and christian lives, and to be fruitful in every good word and work, without which they could never hope to be finally pardoned, justified, or saved.

Obedience to God must, as I said, be the condition upon which his promises are suspended. This obedience in it's principle, as it resides in the hidden man of the heart, which is what will be judged by God the searcher of hearts, and to which we must look for the real character of the man; obedience, I say, in it's principle, is a total resignation of the man, of his will and affections to the will and law of God. In it's effects it includes both faith and good works: leading us to rely with absolute security on God's truth and faithfulness — to believe that what he hath promised he is able also to perform; to submit our understanding to his truth, how mysterious soever it may appear; and

to commit our souls unto him in well-doing, as unto a merciful creator ; expecting his mercies declared in Christ Jesus, how unmerited soever, how incomprehensible soever, and wrapped up from our knowledge in the darkness of futurity. And thus is the virtue of faith, in it's whole extent, included in obedience, and derives all it's value in the sight of God from the principle I have mentioned.

But we are not yet got far enough in this labyrinth of error. We shall next be told, that we are utterly incapable of performing any good works ; that the best works of the best of men are stained with sin ; that our nature is so impaired and corrupted by the fall of our first parents, that we have no power or will to refuse the evil and chuse the good, much less to produce any acceptable fruits of righteousness ; that notwithstanding all the warnings of conscience, and the calls of God to repentance, notwithstanding all his promises, threatenings, and exhortations to a holy life, we cannot believe or repent till we are over-ruled by the irresistible grace of God working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.

But

But where now is the righteous government of the world? Is it possible that God should exact from his creatures what he hath made them unable to perform? That he should mock them by his promises, and hold out rewards to their obedience when they can never obey? And let me ask, if we have not the power of doing good, have we the power of doing evil? But this power cannot be without the other. To be guilty of sin, implies the power of not committing it. To chuse the evil is to refuse the good. Whatever we do from necessity and not from choice, cannot properly be called our doing, and certainly can neither be morally good nor evil. Is not this then to charge God foolishly, and to make him the author of sin? Will not the worst of sinners upon this principle have a ready excuse at hand. — *It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: why then doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?* But is it then true, that our nature is thus totally corrupt, that we have no principle of virtue, or good tendency left within us? Is the love of God and our neighbour unnatural to the mind of man? Is it human nature to be inhuman, that

is, unkind and cruel to our neighbours? Is it a crime, as the apostle supposes, to be without natural affection, and yet are all our natural affections criminal? Is it the common sentiment of mankind to abhor that which is good? Are we not, on the contrary, made to reverence virtue and piety wherever we see them, and to detest and abhor the more flagrant characters of vice and impiety? Is not this principle in some degree seen even in bad men? And does not every man's conscience, when it reproves him for sin, proclaim aloud in his ear that it was in his power to avoid it? If this doctrine be true, there is an end of all virtue and morality, of all reason and religion at once.

The depravity of mankind, and their natural propensity to evil, will be readily acknowledged; that *we are drawn aside of our own lusts and enticed*; that *the flesh lusteth against the spirit*; and that *there is a law in our members warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin*: These difficulties God hath thought necessary, to exercise our faith and prove our virtue. But the scripture assures us, that we may *walk after*

after the spirit and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; that in this case, sin shall not have the dominion over us; that if we resist the devil he will flee from us; that even without the law, men might by nature do the things contained in the law; that under the law many persons wrought righteousness, and, as we may suppose, like Zecharias and his wife Elizabeth, walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.† The scriptures of the old testament were, as we are taught in the new,‡ profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. How much more then is the grace of the gospel sufficient for us? How much more is the faithful christian able to do all things through Christ that strengtheneth him? § The scriptures throughout apply to us, as men capable of deliberation and choice. They sometimes expressly assert this power, and always suppose it as strongly as if it were expressed. Behold, I set before you this day a blessing,*

* Heb. xi. 33.

† Luke i. 6.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

§ Phil. iv. 13.

blessing, and a curse. I have set before thee life and good, death and evil. And again, I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore chuse life. So that the sense of the whole may be expressed in the words of the son of Sirach: God made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his counsel: if thou wilt, to keep the commandments, and to perform acceptable faithfulness. He hath set fire and water before thee: stretch forth thy hand unto whether thou wilt. Before man is life and death, and whether him liketh, shall be given him.†*

But the consequences of this doctrine are so far from discouraging the abettors of it, that they have only led them to extend their system yet farther. It is natural to ask, if men are universally incapable of doing righteousness, and without righteousness or holiness no man shall see the Lord, who then shall be saved? To this and the other difficulties mentioned, their answer is, that to those whom God hath

* Deut. xi. 26. xxx. 15, 19.
14, 15, 16.

† Eccles. xv.

hath decreed to save, and whom he hath of his mere will and pleasure, not for any good dispositions of their own, elected from the rest of mankind, he will impart his grace, convincing them of sin, and of the infinite guilt they lie under; of their own inability to do any thing that is good; of their consequent need of a redeemer, not only of infinite dignity to atone for their sins, but who must in his own person suffer the punishment due for them, and in his own person fulfil the law in their stead; that God will then infuse his saving faith into their hearts, from which time they have the witness of the spirit within them, that the righteousness of Christ is become their righteousness; that they are not only justified or pardoned, but saved, enrolled in the number of God's elect; from which state of grace they cannot finally fall.

Here now is an easy way to salvation, if they can bring themselves to believe it, (which indeed seems not so easy) for the worst of sinners. It is indeed the worst of sinners, who by this account are nearest to the grace of God, and most likely to be of the number of his elect. If the
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best of men are not sensible that they are as bad as the worst ; if instead of thanking God for the means of grace which they enjoy, for the helps and advantages which he hath vouchsafed them towards a holy and godly life, for the benefits of his word and sacraments, for giving them all things pertaining to life and godliness ; if instead of endeavouring to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of all that is good, they are not convinced that all this grace hath been bestowed upon them in vain ; if they are not convinced that all their endeavours thus assisted will be lost, and can have no tendency to recommend them to God's favour ; if they cannot believe that the guilt or righteousness of one may become the personal guilt or righteousness of another ; however they may believe the gospel and all the doctrines which they think delivered in it ; however sincere they may be in their endeavours, and however earnest in their prayers that they may understand the scriptures aright ; however they may disclaim all merit in themselves, and rest the hopes of their acceptance on the merits of Christ ; they are yet far from the kingdom of God.

Thus

Thus the mercies of God are arrogated to themselves, by a few persons who presume to deal out with an unsparing hand, the judgments of heaven against others; and yet charge with pride and presumption the humble believer, whose faith only leads him to hope, with the poor publican, that God will be merciful to him a sinner; and that his imperfect endeavours to serve him will be accepted, and his failures pardoned through the merits of Christ.

Not content with robbing the righteous of all his hopes, and turning the virtues of the best men into sin, they have added yet this above all, to entail the guilt of *Adam's* sin upon all his posterity; thus consigning all without distinction, young and old, infant and suckling, to the punishments of the next world, for no other crime but that of being born in this. It could not be expected, that the scriptures should warn us against a doctrine so unlikely ever to be thought of as this. A thousand volumes might have been written by the apostles, without their suspecting that an opinion like this could be
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conceived by man. But happily, reason and justice do not more strongly reclaim against these hard sayings than the scriptures themselves : which uniformly teach us, that *God would have all men to be saved* ; * *that Christ died for all* ; † *that God hath no pleasure in him that dieth, but rather that he should return and live* ; ‡ *that if he hath concluded all under sin, it is that he might have mercy upon all*. § They no where speak of the imputed righteousness of Christ, or suppose the guilt of *Adam's* sin to be imputed to his posterity ; which cannot be believed without confounding all our ideas of justice and equity, of innocence and guilt. It is indeed once said by *St. Paul*, that *as by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*, || which is almost the only passage of scripture that gives countenance to this doctrine. But the meaning of this, as I have formerly explained to you at large, is only that, as by the first man's disobedience all men became mortal, were in-

* 1 Tim. ii. 4.

† 2 Cor. v. 15.

‡ Ezek. xviii. 23, 32.

§ Rom. xi. 32.

|| Rom. v. 19.

involved in the sentence of death pronounced upon *Adam*; so by the obedience of Christ, the weight of this sentence is removed, all are restored to life again, and to the hopes of a happy immortality. *As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.** This is sufficiently explained in the verses preceding. *As by one man's offence death reigned — all are dead — judgment came upon all men to condemnation; so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life.*† And happily, the case of imputed guilt is expressly and largely stated in one of the prophets, and thus decided with a severe rebuke on those who charged the ways of God with being thus unequal. *The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*‡

I would not be thought to be here censuring and condemning all who embrace or
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* 1 Cor. xv. 22.

† Rom. v. 17, 18, 19.

‡ Ezek. xviii. 20—32.

propagate these doctrines. Far be it from me. We see many among them eminent for their piety and virtue, and who we doubt not will be saved for their works sake; whose lives are indeed a reproach to many of those who too freely deride their opinions. And it is perhaps owing much to our own fault, that these opinions have so far prevailed among us.

The open neglect of piety and christian worship, and of the public exercises of religion, among those whose example carries weight and authority with it, hath infected, as is natural, the lower classes of men; and hence they who most want to learn, deprive themselves of the only opportunities of learning; a consequence of which is, that a general ignorance of the first principles of religion is attended with a general profligacy of manners. Dissipation of mind and inattention to all things serious, and, of consequence, a want of all religious principle, is the prevailing character of the age. And, perhaps, discouraged by these appearances, and by the little success and the little countenance their labours meet with, they whose office it is to call men to repentance,

tance, instead of increasing their efforts, have been more slack and remiss in their duty than they ought. In this state of things, men of serious minds, alarmed with the overflowings of ungodliness, may with the best intentions, have attempted to awaken a sense of religion in the careless and inconsiderate; but for want of judging rightly about the true causes of this corruption, for want of a due knowledge of the scriptures, or of the proper qualifications for interpreting them, from conversing with books of mystical piety, and the writings of those who had but lately emerged from the darkness of popery, and were still wandering in the mazes of school divinity,* and, who were

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* It can scarce I think be denied that the writings of many of our first reformers, and even the articles of the church, in their most obvious meaning, give too much countenance to some of the doctrines here controverted. These have indeed been interpreted in a different sense, by writers of the first authority in the church. This latitude of construction seems to have been claimed and allowed from the beginning. It has been defended by almost all who have written professedly upon them; and they have certainly for more than a century past, been generally interpreted, and that openly and avowedly, and therefore, I hope honestly, with this latitude. But it is still pain and grief to ingenuous minds to subscribe to forms, which in
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therefore in many instances bad interpreters of the scriptures, they have surely erred from the right way through a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; adopting opinions long since exploded, and deforming religion with doctrines highly injurious to the honour of God, and subversive of all the principles of morality.

The mischiefs to be apprehended from the prevalence of these opinions, are great and obvious. They expose religion to the contempt of rational men, and to the scoffs of the prophane and impious, who will

their first appearance they cannot approve. I must therefore earnestly join with those who wish to see the ministers of our church relieved from this burden; from which, though bound by the same law, and formerly attached, at least as firmly by prejudice to the rigid interpretation, the ministers of our dissenting churches have found a way, and are, I am informed, very generally allowed by their congregations, as well as by the magistrate, to exempt themselves. That there have been, and may still subsist, many difficulties in the way of attempting this alteration in our national church; every thinking and candid person will allow. And therefore, till this can be done, it seems a duty in all to forbear complaining of their superiors, and to judge charitably of those, who, in subscribing the same forms, assume a liberty of differing from them in the manner of interpretation; and for which license they may now surely plead the tacit consent and allowance both of the church and state.

will be glad to conclude that to be religious is to be visionary, and that piety and devotion but ill accord with reason and good sense. By decrying the use and necessity of good works, making the obedience of Christ stand for the obedience of Christians, and placing religion in faith and opinion, they relax the obligations of duty, flatter the sinner with false hopes of pardon without reforming and amending his life, put a mask into the hands of hypocrisy, and open a door to licentiousness. By denying the power of choice and freedom of will to men, they help them to an excuse for the worst of crimes, and make God, as I said, the author of sin. By ascribing all that is good in man, to the over-ruling and irresistible power of God, they destroy the possibility of virtue, the idea of a state of trial and probation, and of the justice of God in distributing rewards and punishments.

Let us then be content with the plain practical way to happiness and salvation, which reason and conscience, in concurrence with the law and the gospel, have ever prescribed; which is, by fearing God and keeping his commandments, by con-

forming our lives to the rules and precepts of the gospel, by being *holy in all manner of conversation and godliness*; using thankfully and religiously all the means of grace we enjoy, humbling ourselves under a sense of our unworthiness, and of the many failings and imperfections in our best services, imploring the grace of God's holy spirit to assist and sanctify our endeavours, and relying at last on the merits of Christ for acceptance, *through whom we have received the atonement, and wait in hope of eternal life.*

In trying the spirits or judging of doctrines, which pretend to derive from heaven, let us consult the sentiments of nature and the first dictates of conscience, which God hath written in our hearts, and therefore cannot deceive us. In interpreting scripture, let us take these and the light of reason along with us, and allow no constructions of them that are not consonant to these, and to the first principles of the oracles of God. Let us admit no doctrine for divine, that is not consistent with the moral character of God, and the honour of all his attributes; his goodness, justice, mercy, and truth. Whatever doc-
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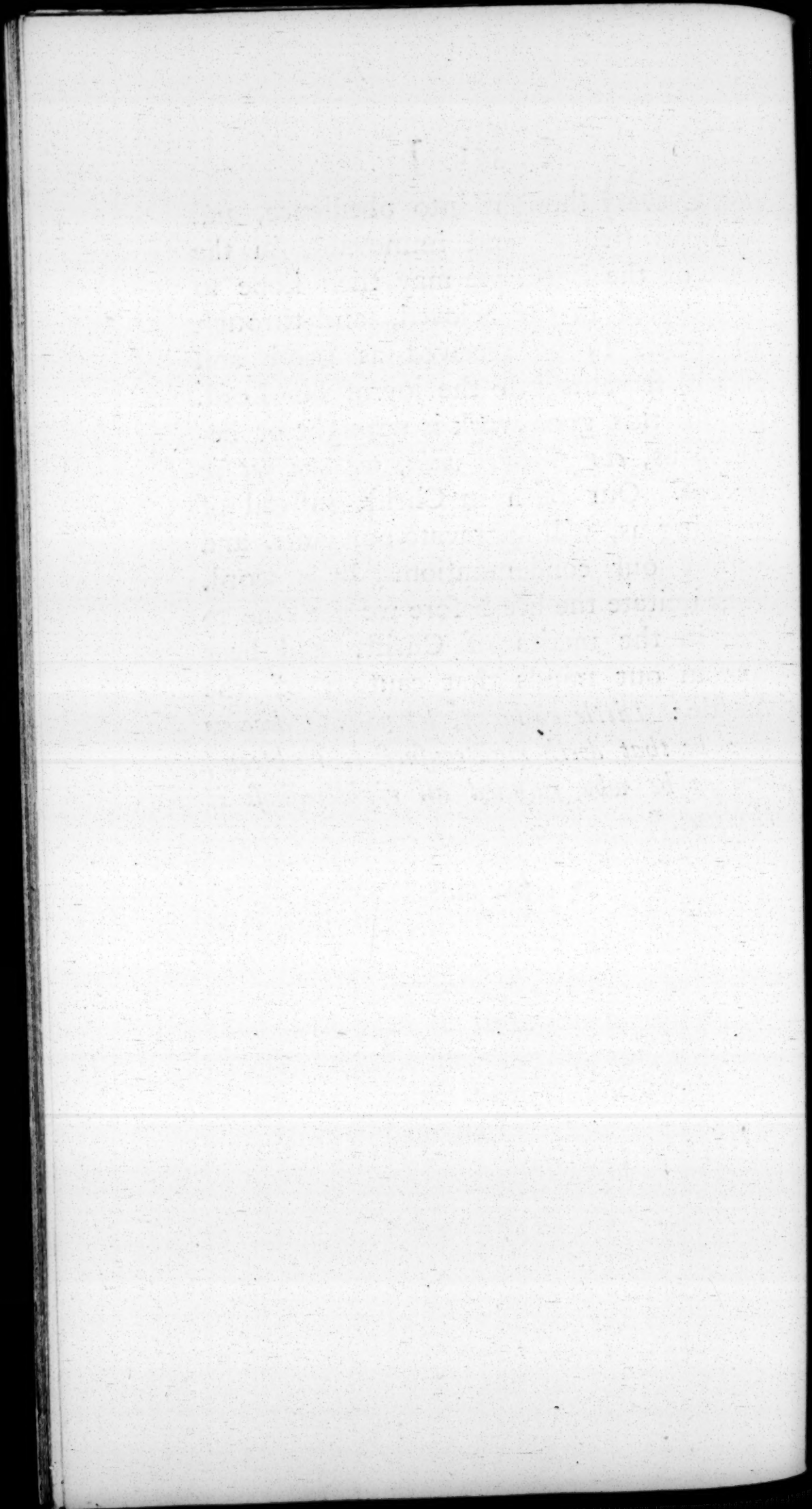
trines coincide with these, and with the plain precepts of the gospel; whatever doctrines give weight to the eternal laws of morality, to righteousness, temperance, and universal charity, lead us to love God and goodness, and to do the will of our father which is in heaven; these we may admit for true: they speak the language, and breathe the spirit of the gospel. On the contrary, whatever doctrines dispense with the practice, or may be applied to evade the force of the gospel precepts; whatever doctrines loosen the obligations of duty, speak peace to the sinner, or flatter him in his sins; these cannot be of God, or of Christ, and are carefully to be avoided as dangerous snares to our consciences. Let us ever interpret the more difficult passages of scripture by those that are clear and evident, remembering that what is necessary to all, must be level to the capacities of all. Let us not wrest these into articles of faith, or with this obscure light in our hands, presume to enter into the counsels and decrees of providence, and matters of speculation which are too high for us. *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which*

*which are revealed, which are laid open to every understanding, these are the things which belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.** The mysteries of religion, as far as they are revealed to us in the gospel, the doctrine of redemption, and the great salvation wrought for us by Jesus Christ, are mysteries of godliness; are designed to raise our ideas of the divine goodness and mercy, to excite our love and gratitude, and to engage all the generous affections of the heart in his service; to give us a due sense of our high calling in Christ Jesus, of the dignity and honours belonging to our christian profession, and of that eminence in piety and virtue which they require from us. These therefore we should contemplate with reverence, and give them their due influence on our minds, till *the love of God rule in our hearts, and the love of Christ constrain us to all holy obedience, and to abound in every good word and work.* When our faith is thus made perfect in holiness, when it has spiritualized our affections, and raised them from the things on earth to things above, when it has cap-
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* Deut. xxix. 29.

tivated every thought into obedience, and made us stedfast and immovable in the work of the Lord, we may then hope to be accepted in the beloved, and through his merits to be received as good and faithful servants into the joy of our Lord. But till this good work is wrought or begun in us, *our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins.* Our faith in Christ, instead of justifying us, will aggravate our guilt, and increase our condemnation. In a word, let us imitate the life before we presume to trust in the merits of Christ, and bear ever in our minds that caution of the Apostle: *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he who fulfilled all righteousness is righteous.* *

* 1 John iii. 7.



PASTORAL ADVICE
TO
YOUNG PERSONS
BEFORE
CONFIRMATION.

Printed first in the Year 1772.



PASTORAL ADVICE, &c.

YOU are now called, my young
Y friends, to perform a duty of
great consequence in the religious
life : and it is my desire, as
well as my duty, to assist you in preparing
for it.

If you have read over the office of Confirmation, in your Common Prayer Book, you have seen that the design of it is, on your part, to renew and ratify the covenant that was made for you at your baptism ; and to take upon yourselves that vow and promise which was then made in your name. It is called confirmation, from your then confirming what your God-fathers and God-mothers did for you.

You are now become capable of thinking, and acting for yourselves. And sure the first thing you ought to think of, is, what you were brought into this world to do; what the will of God concerning you is; and what part you are to act, in order to secure his blessing and favour both here and hereafter. This is what religion teaches, and what you have been learning from your infancy. You are now to reflect seriously on the instructions you have received from your parents, masters, and ministers. And if you hearken to their advice, and resolve to lead a godly and a christian life, (as I hope all of you do,) you are here in the most solemn manner to declare it, before God and his church.

This then is a critical and important period of your life. The duty you are here called to, is to be done but once; and on the well-doing of it, very much depends your whole happiness, both in this life and the next. Let it then be well considered what you are now doing. You are going to profess yourselves christians; to enter into a solemn covenant with the God that made you, the Lord of heaven and earth; who
hath

hath already called you into the kingdom of his dear Son, into his church and family here ; and invites you to be partakers of his kingdom of glory hereafter : and to whom therefore you here offer and present yourselves, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him : devoting, from this time, all the powers of your mind and body to his service, and promising that you will walk worthy of this holy vocation, and as becometh the gospel of Christ.

Consider then, what it is to be a true christian. It is to abstain from every kind, from all appearance of evil ; and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. It is to keep yourselves unspotted from the world, holy, sober, chaste, and undefiled ; as members of Christ's mystical body, and temples of the Holy Ghost. It is to be followers of Christ, as dear children ; to take up his cross ; to resist temptations ; to endure afflictions as good soldiers of Jesus Christ ; to renounce all worldly pleasure, honour, and profit, when your duty calls to it ; and to live, not like those who have hope in this life only, but as travellers to a better country, and whose treasure, whose hope, and heritage, is in the kingdom of heaven.

All this is implied on your part, in the act of confirmation. It is a solemn dedication of yourselves to God and virtue. As you were baptized into the christian church, by the care of your parents, you now become members of it from knowledge and choice. You take Christ for your Lord and Master ; and his gospel for the rule of your life, and the foundation of all your hopes. You accept with joy and thankfulness, the privileges conferred upon you at baptism, and the gracious terms of pardon, peace, and eternal life, which are held out to you in the gospel. You beg the assistance of God's grace and Holy Spirit, to confirm and strengthen your good resolutions ; and promise, as you expect his mercy and favour, all holy obedience to his will in all things.

This then, is a time for you to look around and consider. You are now in the hands of your own counsel. Eternity is before you, and it is left to your own choice, whether to be happy or miserable for ever. God hath given you the light of his gospel to walk by ; hath forewarned you what you are to hope and fear ; hath shewn you the dangers to which you are exposed, and
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the means to avoid them ; hath entered you early in a course of piety and virtue ; hath given you already all things pertaining to life and godliness : and it will therefore be your own fault if you bring his curse upon you and not a blessing. He hath this day set before you good and evil, life and death eternal ; and whether of them liketh you shall be given you.

Do you then believe these things ? I know that you believe them. Do you resolve to keep God's holy commandments, and to walk in them all the days of your life ? I know that you resolve to do this. I know that when you think on the great mercies which God hath bestowed upon you ; the great things which our Saviour Christ hath done and suffered for you ; your hearts burn within you, and you think that nothing will be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. But alas, when you come to mix with the world, all these resolutions will be apt to fail you. Other cares and concerns will get possession of your minds : and amidst the noise and tumult, the labour and business, the pleasures and amusements of life, you will be yet apt to forget God that made,
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and the Lord that bought you. You may, in the morning of life, receive the seed of the word with joy, and it may spring up and endure for a while ; but when the sun is up, and temptations have gathered strength, it may yet be scorched and withered away. How many do we see who profess to believe all these great truths, and yet forget them in practice ? How many, who were once in the same happy situation that you are in at present, have fallen from grace ; and after they had known the way of righteousness, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, have yet turned away from the holy commandment delivered unto them ; and having begun in the spirit, have yet ended in the flesh !

This is a sad consideration, and a melancholy proof of the corruption and deceitfulness of the human heart. And this consideration should alarm your fears, and put you upon inquiring, by what means you may best increase your spiritual strength, and fortify yourselves against the temptations that you are to encounter. And this is the great business to which it is my prin-

principal design at present to direct your thoughts and attention.

Observe then, that good resolutions are not enough to make you good men. It is not in your power to make yourselves on a sudden, as good and as virtuous as you please. Good habits must be formed by labour and exercise. The art of living must be acquired like every other useful art, with pains and industry. You must lay down some plan and course of life, some rules for the government of yourselves; for the improvement of your virtue; and for guarding against sin: and these must be invariably observed, if you would preserve your innocence, or deserve the character or name of christians.

Many are the difficulties that you are to contend with, and the dangers that lie in your way. You are going into the world with little knowledge or experience of it, at an age when the mind is full of confidence, and of hopes that will certainly deceive you: when the passions are strong, and your reason and judgment still weak. You will see many bad examples before you, and some perhaps among those whom you love and esteem;

esteem ; who, without designing any harm, may seduce you into sin, and bring you into the same condemnation with themselves. You will see swearing, drunkenness and lewdness, but little discouraged ; and religion and piety but little countenanced, by the practice or conversation of men. Every condition and circumstance of life, will bring some temptation along with it. Your table may become a snare, and your wealth and health an occasion of falling. And besides these temptations from without, you have much to fear within ; from your own weakness and the deceitfulness of your own hearts. Your senses and appetites may call for sinful indulgences. Your thoughts and imagination, if not carefully watched over, will themselves become sinful, by wandering in the fields of forbidden pleasure. Lust and sensual pleasure may instill a sweet poison into the mind, and lay all it's good resolutions asleep. Anger, pride, ambition, envy, will often be rising in your breasts. O let not these wicked spirits enter in and dwell there,

Thus beset from without and disarmed within, you will be in great danger of falling. The horror you have conceived for
sin,

fin, will be apt soon to wear off ; your love of God and goodness to wax cold ; and your good resolutions to desert you, and disappear like the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away.

But be not discouraged by these difficulties, nor let your hearts be troubled. Fear not, little flock ; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. It is his gracious design to bring many sons unto glory : and if you be not wanting to yourselves, none shall pluck you out of his hands. His religion which teaches your duty, will enable you to perform it. The gospel is a compleat rule of life. It not only enjoins you to be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness, but administers every needful help and instruction, to make you perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The precepts it delivers, have such a commanding force and beauty in them, and carry such conviction into the mind ; the character it prescribes as a model for your imitation, is so amiable, so excellent and godlike ; the exhortations it addresses to your love and gratitude, and to all the generous passions of the heart, are so affectionate and persuasive ; the motives

tives it proposes to your hopes and fears, so great and alarming ; so glorious and tremendous ; so far more exceeding all that we can in thought or imagination conceive ; that nothing will be able to shake your virtue, while you keep these in view, or preserve the impression of them fresh in your minds.

And for this, religion hath likewise provided, in the spiritual exercises and sacred ordinances, which it has appointed. The ministry of the word and sacraments in the church and congregation of the saints ; the observation of the sabbath, as a day of holy rest unto the Lord ; the assembling of ourselves together, to commemorate the gracious acts of the Lord, and to shew forth all his praise ; these are so many opportunities put into your hands of growing in grace, and in the knowledge and practice of all that is good.

Prayer is itself not only an indispensable duty incumbent upon all intelligent dependent beings, and especially becoming fallen and sinful creatures ; but is likewise a call to every other duty ; a daily monitor to us, of the importance and necessity of a holy life.

life. It is not only a call to duty, but a formal acknowledgment of our obligations, and a repeated vow and promise to perform it. You cannot confess your past sins to God without renouncing them for the future; you cannot consistently pray that he would not lead you into temptation, without resolving to avoid and flee from it. When you ask forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer, you solemnly engage to forgive every one his trespasses against you. Thus every prayer, if you attend to it, is a lesson of duty; and is farther, a powerful assistance in the performance of it. By setting God before you, and carrying your thoughts into the other world, it will raise your affections above the things of this. By bringing every sin you have committed, and every duty you have neglected, before your eyes; it will warn you where your weakness and danger lies, and how best to guard yourselves for the future. But besides all this, it is the certain and appointed means of bringing God's blessing and assistance, to strengthen your weak endeavours, and to support and comfort you in all the severer trials of virtue. If ye being evil, saith our blessed Lord, give good gifts unto

unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him.

The Sabbath is made a day of rest from all your labours, not only that you may attend upon the Lord without distraction, but for your improvement in virtue and holiness of life; to give you leisure, and to make it a duty in you, to reflect on your spiritual concerns; to think on the motives and obligations to duty, and to apply these to your own circumstances and persons. The publick duty of the day, which you are religiously bound to attend, will not fail to bring all these to your thoughts, and will be the most powerful means to imprint a sense of them deeply and strongly on the mind. But besides this, it will be pious and prudent to allot a part of the remaining day to retirement and the closet; to examine the state of your minds; what your true character is, with respect to God and Religion; and what progress you have made, or whether you have gone back in the ways of virtue. This will strengthen and confirm your good resolutions, and have the happiest influence on your life and practice.

In

In the holy communion, which it will be your duty henceforward to attend, the great doctrines and motives of religion are again brought, in all their force and influence, before you. The love of God to mankind, in sending his Son into the world, that all who believe and obey him should have eternal life ; the life and example, the sufferings and death of our blessed Lord, as they are here represented to your thoughts, will, if devoutly contemplated, raise in you every sentiment of love and duty to God your redeemer and sanctifier, as well as your creator and preserver ; will fill you with a hatred and abhorrence of sin ; will strengthen your faith and hope, and every virtuous and religious principle within you. The commemoration of Christ, our Lord and lawgiver, our mediator and intercessor, under whatever character or relation we represent him to ourselves, carries in it some affecting motive, and is a powerful call to repentance, amendment and holiness of life.

Thus religion trains up her sons, by exercise and diligence, to wisdom and virtue.

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The ordinances it enjoins, are a spiritual discipline, intended for the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ : and which will not fail, if devoutly attended, to lead you on from strength to strength, until Christ, — until the christian life and temper be formed in you.

Let me then persuade you, to make the best use of these means of grace, and to be punctual in the observance of all your religious duties : and to apply them, as they are designed, to your spiritual improvement in piety and every other virtue. Let every morning and evening be witness to the offering up, in your prayers and praises, your whole heart and affections to God. Let nothing tempt you to profane his sabbath, or to absent yourselves from the publick service of the church : and be sure to dedicate some part of this day, to the communing with your own heart in private, there to review your past conduct, and to arm yourselves with fresh resolutions to reform what has been amiss, and to supply every thing that has been defective in it. Be prepared with due solemnity, when you approach the table of the Lord, to offer
and

and present yourselves, your souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God. Encourage every sentiment of holy love and gratitude, that will then arise within you. And when you stand in the congregation amongst your brethren, whom God hath made your companions through this journey of life; with whom you are united, as one body, in breaking the same bread of life, and drinking the same spiritual cup; let every kind affection of charity and brotherly love take deep root, and prevail and rule in your hearts.

And let not these duties be thought a hard or unreasonable service. Experience will soon convince you, that they are easy and delightful in practice: and they will help to make every other duty easy and delightful. But if you resolve upon a life of virtue, you must resolve to use the means that are necessary to attain it. If you would arrive at christian perfection, you must build upon christian principles, and go the way to it which christianity directs. If you chuse the Lord for your God, and expect heaven for your reward, you must use

all diligence to work out your salvation, and to make your calling and election sure. You must indeed be prepared to sacrifice every thing to your duty, to submit every passion and appetite, the love of pleasure, the fear of pain, and every motion of self-love, to reason and conscience. But, even the greatest of these difficulties, to minds well formed and disciplined, will appear little, and will be more than balanced by the pleasantness and peace, which ever attend the ways of wisdom and virtue. You will rejoice, if called to it, to suffer troubles and persecution, and thro' tribulation to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But in the ordinary course of things, a little care and attention in the early part of life will make the yoke of religion always easy, and it's burden always light. God hath formed our minds for virtue; hath made us naturally to love and reverence it. The first commission of sin is always a violence offered to our reason and conscience. And shame and remorse are the certain consequences attending it. If therefore we are careful to guard our innocence for a time, and cherish these seeds of virtue, our good dispositions will grow into habits; the

the principles of religion will become permanent, and rooted in the mind; our faith and trust in God will be ever awake and active in our breasts, ready to oppose to every temptation, and to give us the victory over the world. It is indeed to our own sloth and carelessness that the temptations of the world owe most of their force and influence; and the greatest difficulties of virtue are generally of our own making. We suffer bad habits to grow up and get strength within us, and it is then difficult to reduce and conquer them. Our appetites and passions become inflamed and fortified by sinful indulgences, and then all our reason and resolution will be scarce sufficient to restrain them.

It is therefore of unspeakable consequence to guard the first years of your life from danger, till virtue has got the full possession, and established it's empire over the heart. And this will make the rest of your duty a pleasure, and give joy and gladness to all your future days. For godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. God is not a hard task-master, requiring unnecessary severities

verities at our hand. His laws are wisdom and goodness ; enjoining nothing but what is reasonable and excellent, and ornamental to our nature ; nothing but what is good both for ourselves and others : nothing but what prudence and attention will make easy, and custom delightful in practice ; which will secure us the approbation of our own hearts, and the love and esteem of the world about us ; will bring down the blessing of God and his grace, to assist and support us here, and fit us for his kingdom of glory hereafter. On the other hand, if we desert the service of God, his grace and blessing will be withdrawn from us. All the joys of religion will forsake us, and guilt and anxiety succeed in their room. We shall forfeit all the purer pleasures of the mind, and gain only, in exchange for them, such as degrade and debase our nature ; such as bring shame and regret, pollution and defilement along with them, and leave a fearful looking-for of judgment behind them.

Be persuaded then, and resolved, to remember your creator in the days of your youth. Let the best of your days, the
flower

flower of your age, and the first fruits of your life, be God's: and this will be an offering, the most worthy of him, and the most pleasing in his sight. Remember, that God is the Being with whom you have to do; that with him alone you are to account, and with him must certainly account for all your actions; for every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Remember, that you are not born for a day, but for eternity; that this life is only your preparation for another, and that the more you do, and suffer here for righteousness sake, the greater will be your reward hereafter. Lastly, remember that for all the privileges, blessings and assistances you have received from heaven, higher improvements in virtue will be expected from you. If after all the vows and resolutions you have made, you yet fall from duty; the guilt of every sin will be increased, and it will be more difficult hereafter, to renew yourselves again unto repentance. If you ever draw back from the service of God, his soul will have no pleasure in you. And therefore, let me take my leave of you, with the solemn benediction and religious admonition, which

David left as his last advice to his son *Solomon* : ‘ And now, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind : for the Lord seareth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts ; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.’





P R A Y E R S

F O R

Y O U N G P E R S O N S.

I Bow my knees before the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, in a thankful sense of his grace and mercy, in calling me to be a member of his spiritual kingdom on earth ; and blessing me with the hopes of his eternal kingdom in heaven. O that I may live worthy of this holy vocation wherewith I am called, of these immortal hopes which are placed before me.

Thou knowest, Lord, the very secrets of my heart, and with what sincerity, ardour, and true devotion, I offer up these thoughts unto thee. May thy grace and holy spirit be ever present with me to stablish, strengthen, settle, these resolutions within me. And let not thine abundant goodness
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be lost or bestowed in vain upon me: for then better had it been that I had never known the gospel of thy Son. O let me answer thy loving kindness and mercy, by a life of holiness, purity, and fervent charity; and by a perfect resignation of myself and all that is within me, to thy holy will in all things. Let me be ever mindful of thy covenant, and of the vows which I have made to serve and obey thee. I have sworn, and I will perform it, to keep thy righteous judgments. May thy sabbaths be my delight; and bless to me thy sacred ordinances, that by a constant attendance on the offices and holy communion of thy church, my thoughts and affections may be raised from earthly to heavenly objects; that my conscience may be awake to every call of duty; and that it may be my highest pleasure to please thee; my first and daily care never to offend thee.

O Lord God, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy servant, and stablish my heart unto thee. *Amen.*

A MORN-



A MORNING PRAYER.

O LORD, to whom I owe my life and every comfort of it, I most humbly pray that I may live always mindful of my dependence upon thee, and the mercies I have received from thee. May I consider that no action, word or thought of mine is unknown to thee; and therefore be at all times careful to think, to speak, and to do what is right. As I hope to be eternally happy, O let me seriously attend to those duties which must qualify me for being so. Grant that I may keep it always uppermost in my thoughts, that thy favour is only to be obtained by the holiness of my life, and by doing in it all the good in my power. Let it be ever in my heart to do all kind offices, and to promote peace and happiness among my neighbours. May I be true and faithful to all my engagements; especially to the promises and vows of obedience which I have made to thee — to govern my passions — to correct in myself every vicious inclination — to keep my body in temperance, soberness and chastity — to be true and just in all my dealings — and to do
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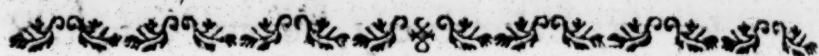
unto others what I should, in their case, expect them to do unto me. Give me health and strength chearfully to go through the duties of my calling. Bless the labour of my hands, and accept of my honest industry, as a part of the duty I owe to thee, as well as to my family and country. Let no temptations of pleasure or of profit rob me of my honesty and virtue. In thy favour and the hope of thy eternal mercy I shall be happy in whatever station of life thou art pleased to place me. Let this hope be my comfort, my refuge and support in all circumstances; thro' *Jesus Christ* our Lord; in whose name and words, I pray for all mankind; *Our Father, &c.*



AN EVENING PRAYER.

O LORD, who hast preserved me this day, I bless thee for thus continuing thy care of, and goodness to me. Grant that I may shew my thankfulness, by my sincere endeavours to perform thy will in all things. I most humbly beg forgiveness of every sin that I have committed; and it is likewise my most earnest prayer that I
may

may never so dangerously deceive myself, as to think thou wilt forgive my sins, if I do not forsake them. Let it be my firmest belief that nothing can recommend me to thy favour, if I do not lead an holy and useful life; and that when I allow myself in any kind of guilt, even my prayers will be an abomination to thee. Give me grace so to live, as always in thy presence: and since all my actions and thoughts are known to thee, let me neither in deed or will be guilty of any thing that can displease thee. Enable me to improve in virtue and goodness; to correct in myself every bad habit, and to resist every vicious inclination. May nothing disturb my rest this night. Vouchsafe me such refreshing sleep, as may fit me for the duties of the following day. Thou alone knowest how near my death may be; and as every day brings me nearer to it, grant that I may become every day fitter for it. Prosper all who have done me good; pardon all who have designed me evil: and grant that we may at last meet in peace and love in thy everlasting kingdom, thro' *Jesus Christ* our Lord and Saviour; in whose name and words I farther pray: *Our Father, &c.*



A PARAPHRASE upon the
LORD'S PRAYER;

To be used in a Family or in Private.

ETERNAL Father, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named, permit us among thy children, to approach the throne of thy grace; to commit ourselves to thy protection; and to resign all our cares and interests into the hands of thy fatherly providence: may all thy creatures, whom thou hast made capable of worshipping and serving thee, adore with reverence thy infinite perfections; and consecrate all the powers and faculties of their nature to thy service. Grant that all mankind may come to the knowledge of thy true religion; that the kingdom of Christ may be extended over all the earth; and the eternal laws of piety, charity and temperance, be established throughout the whole world. Grant that all who profess this thy true religion, may live in perfect obedience to it's laws: and as thou hast
given

given us to aspire to heaven for our reward, let us make every heavenly virtue our aim ; and endeavour after that perfection which thou hast made our model. We acknowledge in all things our dependence upon thee, and that every moment we subsist by thy bounty. Let thy good providence, which hath hitherto preserved us, be still our guide and support, supplying us with all things that are needful for us ; that we may pass through this life without anxiety, and employ all our cares in preparing for a better. Let a sense of our own infirmities, and of that mercy and compassion which we want and implore at thy hands, inspire us with meekness and humility, and with tenderness and compassion for the infirmities of each other : and pardon, we beseech thee, the many sins we have committed, the many neglects of our duty towards thee ; as we from our hearts forgive those that have injured or offended against us. And assist us by thy grace, against all future temptations, whether of the world, the flesh, or the devil. Let no vain confidence in our own strength, tempt us to neglect those means which thou hast appointed to guard and strengthen our virtue. Let not our past iniquities provoke thee to withdraw
thy

thy holy spirit from us : but let thy providence work together with us, that by watchfulness and prayer, and the duties of religion, we may keep ourselves true to thy service, and from falling under the dominion of sin and satan : Thou that art the sovereign disposer of all events, and whose kingdom ruleth over all ; from whose power all things have their beginning, and in whose glory all things end. *Amen.*

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T H E E N D.

N. B. A small Edition of this Tract is printed in 12mo. Price 2d. or 12s. a hundred.

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